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THE MAN OF DESTINY

AND HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND

TWO PLAYS

By

BERNARD SHAW

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NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1916

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HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND

1904

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PREFACE

LIKE many other works of mine, this playlet is a *pièce d'occasion*. In 1905 it happened that Mr. Arnold Daly, who was then playing the part of Napoleon in The Man of Destiny in New York, found that whilst the play was too long to take a secondary place in the evening's performance, it was too short to suffice by itself. I therefore took advantage of four days continuous rain during a holiday in the north of Scotland to write How He Lied To Her Husband for Mr. Daly. In his hands, it served its turn very effectively.

I print it here as a sample of what can be done with even the most hackneyed stage framework by filling it in with an observed touch of actual humanity instead of with doctrinaire romanticism. Nothing in the theatre is staler than the situation of husband, wife and lover, or the fun of knockabout farce. I have taken both, and got an original play out of them, as anybody else can if only he will look about him for his material instead of plagiarizing Othello and the thousand plays that have proceeded on Othello's romantic assumptions and false point of honor.

A further experiment made by Mr. Arnold Daly with this play is worth recording. In 1905 Mr. Daly produced Mrs. Warren's Profession in New York. The press of that city instantly raised a cry that such persons as Mrs. Warren are "ordure," and should not be mentioned in the presence of decent people. This hideous repudiation of humanity and social conscience so took possession of the New York journalists that the

few among them who kept their feet morally and intellectually could do nothing to check the epidemic of foul language, gross suggestion, and raving obscenity of word and thought that broke out. The writers abandoned all self-restraint under the impression that they were upholding virtue instead of outraging it. They infected each other with their hysteria until they were for all practical purposes indecently mad. They finally forced the police to arrest Mr. Daly and his company, and led the magistrate to express his loathing of the duty thus forced upon him of reading an unmentionable and abominable play. Of course the convulsion soon exhausted itself. The magistrate, naturally somewhat impatient when he found that what he had to read was a strenuously ethical play forming part of a book which had been in circulation unchallenged for eight years, and had been received without protest by the whole London and New York press, gave the journalists a piece of his mind as to their moral taste in plays. By consent, he passed the case on to a higher court, which declared that the play was not immoral; acquitted Mr. Daly; and made an end of the attempt to use the law to declare living women to be "ordure," and thus enforce silence as to the far-reaching fact that you cannot cheapen women in the market for industrial purposes without cheapening them for other purposes as well. I hope Mrs. Warren's Profession will be played everywhere, in season and out of season, until Mrs. Warren has bitten that fact into the public conscience, and shamed the newspapers which support a tariff to keep up the price of every American commodity except American manhood and womanhood.

Unfortunately, Mr. Daly had already suffered the usual fate of those who direct public attention to the profits of the sweater or the pleasures of the voluptuary. He was morally lynched side by side with me. Months elapsed before the decision of the courts vindicated him;

and even then, since his vindication implied the condemnation of the press, which was by that time sober again, and ashamed of its orgie, his triumph received a rather sulky and grudging publicity. In the meantime he had hardly been able to approach an American city, including even those cities which had heaped applause on him as the defender of hearth and home when he produced Candida, without having to face articles discussing whether mothers could allow their daughters to attend such plays as You Never Can Tell, written by the infamous author of Mrs. Warren's Profession, and acted by the monster who produced it. What made this harder to bear was that though no fact is better established in theatrical business than the financial disastrousness of moral discredit, the journalists who had done all the mischief kept paying vice the homage of assuming that it is enormously popular and lucrative, and that I and Mr. Daly, being exploiters of vice, must therefore be making colossal fortunes out of the abuse heaped on us, and had in fact provoked it and welcomed it with that express object. Ignorance of real life could hardly go further.

One consequence was that Mr. Daly could not have kept his financial engagements or maintained his hold on the public had he not accepted engagements to appear for a season in the vaudeville theatres (the American equivalent of our music halls), where he played How He Lied to Her Husband comparatively unhampered by the press censorship of the theatre, or by that sophistication of the audience through press suggestion from which I suffer more, perhaps, than any other author. Vaudeville authors are fortunately unknown: the audiences see what the play contains and what the actor can do, not what the papers have told them to expect. Success under such circumstances had a value both for Mr. Daly and myself which did something to console us for the very unsavory mobbing which the New York

press organized for us, and which was not the less disgusting because we suffered in a good cause and in the very best company.

Mr. Daly, having weathered the storm, can perhaps shake his soul free of it as he heads for fresh successes with younger authors. But I have certain sensitive places in my soul: I do not like that word "ordure." Apply it to my work, and I can afford to smile, since the world, on the whole, will smile with me. But to apply it to the woman in the street, whose spirit is of one substance with our own and her body no less holy: to look your womenfolk in the face afterwards and not go out and hang yourself: that is not on the list of pardonable sins.

HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND

It is eight o'clock in the evening. The curtains are drawn and the lamps lighted in the drawing room of Her flat in Cromwell Road. Her lover, a beautiful youth of eighteen, in evening dress and cape, with a bunch of flowers and an opera hat in his hands, comes in alone. The door is near the corner; and as he appears in the doorway, he has the fireplace on the nearest wall to his right, and the grand piano along the opposite wall to his left. Near the fireplace a small ornamental table has on it a hand mirror, a fan, a pair of long white gloves, and a little white woollen cloud to wrap a woman's head in. On the other side of the room, near the piano, is a broad, square, softly upholstered stool. The room is furnished in the most approved South Kensington fashion: that is, it is as like a show room as possible, and is intended to demonstrate the social position and spending powers of its owners, and not in the least to make them comfortable.

He is, be it repeated, a very beautiful youth, moving as in a dream, walking as on air. He puts his flowers down carefully on the table beside the fan; takes off his cape, and, as there is no room on the table for it, takes it to the piano; puts his hat on the cape; crosses to the hearth; looks at his watch; puts it up again; notices the things on the table; lights up as if he saw heaven opening before him; goes to the table and takes the cloud in both hands, nestling his nose into its softness and kissing it; kisses the gloves one after another; kisses

the fan; gasps a long shuddering sigh of ecstasy; sits down on the stool and presses his hands to his eyes to shut out reality and dream a little; takes his hands down and shakes his head with a little smile of rebuke for his folly; catches sight of a speck of dust on his shoes and hastily and carefully brushes it off with his handkerchief; rises and takes the hand mirror from the table to make sure of his tie with the gravest anxiety; and is looking at his watch again when She comes in, much flustered. As she is dressed for the theatre; has spoilt, petted ways; and wears many diamonds, she has an air of being a young and beautiful woman; but as a matter of hard fact, she is, dress and pretensions apart, a very ordinary South Kensington female of about 37, hopelessly inferior in physical and spiritual distinction to the beautiful youth, who hastily puts down the mirror as she enters.

HE (*kissing her hand*). At last!

SHE. Henry: something dreadful has happened.

HE. Whats the matter?

SHE. I have lost your poems.

HE. They were unworthy of you. I will write you some more.

SHE. No, thank you. Never any more poems for me. Oh, how could I have been so mad! so rash! so imprudent!

HE. Thank Heaven for your madness, your rashness, your imprudence!

SHE (*impatiently*). Oh, be sensible, Henry. Cant you see what a terrible thing this is for me? Suppose anybody finds these poems! what will they think?

HE. They will think that a man once loved a woman more devotedly than ever man loved woman before. But they will not know what man it was.

SHE. What good is that to me if everybody will know what woman it was?

HE. But how will they know?

SHE. How will they know! Why, my name is all over them: my silly, unhappy name. Oh, if I had only been christened Mary Jane, or Gladys Muriel, or Beatrice, or Francesca, or Guinevere, or something quite common! But Aurora! Aurora! I'm the only Aurora in London; and everybody knows it. I believe I'm the only Aurora in the world. And it's so horribly easy to rhyme to it! Oh, Henry, why didn't you try to restrain your feelings a little in common consideration for me? Why didnt you write with some little reserve?

HE. Write poems to you with reserve! You ask me that!

SHE (*with perfunctory tenderness*). Yes, dear, of course it was very nice of you; and I know it was my own fault as much as yours. I ought to have noticed that your verses ought never to have been addressed to a married woman.

HE. Ah, how I wish they had been addressed to an u n-married woman! h o w I wish they had!

SHE. Indeed you have no right to wish anything of the sort. They are quite unfit for anybody but a married woman. Thats just the difficulty. What will my sisters-in-law think of them?

HE (*painfully jarred*). Have y o u got sisters-in-law?

SHE. Yes, of course I have. Do you suppose I am an angel?

HE (*biting his lips*). I do. Heaven help me, I do—or I did—or (*he almost chokes a sob*).

SHE (*softening and putting her hand caressingly on his shoulder*). Listen to me, dear. Its very nice of you to live with me in a dream, and to love me, and so on; but I cant help my husband having disagreeable relatives, can I?

HE (*brightening up*). Ah, of course they are your husband's relatives: I forgot that. Forgive me, Aurora.

(*He takes her hand from his shoulder and kisses it. She sits down on the stool. He remains near the table, with his back to it, smiling fatuously down at her.*)

SHE. The fact is, Teddy's got nothing but relatives. He has eight sisters and six half-sisters, and ever so many brothers—but I dont mind his brothers. Now if you only knew the least little thing about the world, Henry, youd know that in a large family, though the sisters quarrel with one another like mad all the time, yet let one of the brothers marry, and they all turn on their unfortunate sister-in-law and devote the rest of their lives with perfect unanimity to persuading him that his wife is unworthy of him. They can do it to her very face without her knowing it, because there are always a lot of stupid low family jokes that nobody understands but themselves. Half the time you cant tell what theyre talking about: it just drives you wild. There ought to be a law against a man's sister ever entering his house after hes married. I'm as certain as that I'm sitting here that Georgina stole those poems out of my workbox.

HE. She will not understand them, I think.

SHE. Oh, wont she! She'll understand them only too well. She'll understand more harm than ever was in them: nasty vulgar-minded cat!

HE (*going to her*). Oh dont, dont think of people in that way. Dont think of her at all. (*He takes her hand and sits down on the carpet at her feet.*) Aurora: do you remember the evening when I sat here at your feet and read you those poems for the first time?

SHE. I shouldnt have let you: I see that now. When I think of Georgina sitting there at Teddy's feet and reading them to h i m for the first time, I feel I shall just go distracted.

HE. Yes, you are right. It will be a profanation.

SHE. Oh, I dont care about the profanation; but

what will Teddy think? what will he do? (*Suddenly throwing his head away from her knee.*) You dont seem to think a bit about Teddy. (*She jumps up, more and more agitated.*)

HE (*supine on the floor; for she has thrown him off his balance*). To me Teddy is nothing, and Georgina less than nothing.

SHE. Youll soon find out how much less than nothing she is. If you think a woman cant do any harm because shes only a scandalmongering dowdy ragbag, youre greatly mistaken. (*She flounces about the room. He gets up slowly and dusts his hands. Suddenly she runs to him and throws herself into his arms.*) Henry: help me. Find a way out of this for me; and I'll bless you as long as you live. Oh, how wretched I am! (*She sobs on his breast.*)

HE. And oh! how happy I am!

SHE (*whisking herself abruptly away*). Dont be selfish.

HE (*humbly*). Yes: I deserve that. I think if I were going to the stake with you, I should still be so happy with you that I could hardly feel your danger more than my own.

SHE (*relenting and patting his hand fondly*). Oh, you are a dear darling boy, Henry; but (*throwing his hand away fretfully*) youre no u s e. I want somebody to tell me what to do.

HE (*with quiet conviction*). Your heart will tell you at the right time. I have thought deeply over this; and I know what we two m u s t do, sooner or later.

SHE. No, Henry. I will do nothing improper, nothing dishonorable. (*She sits down plump on the stool and looks inflexible.*)

HE. If you did, you would no longer be Aurora. Our course is perfectly simple, perfectly straightforward, perfectly stainless and true. We love one another. I am not ashamed of that: I am ready to go out and pro-

claim it to all London as simply as I will declare it to your husband when you see—as you soon will see—that this is the only way honorable enough for your feet to tread. Let us go out together to our own house, this evening, without concealment and without shame. Remember! we owe something to your husband. We are his guests here: he is an honorable man: he has been kind to us: he has perhaps loved you as well as his prosaic nature and his sordid commercial environment permitted. We owe it to him in all honor not to let him learn the truth from the lips of a scandalmonger. Let us go to him now quietly, hand in hand; bid him farewell; and walk out of the house without concealment and subterfuge, freely and honestly, in full honor and self-respect.

SHE (*staring at him*). And where shall we go to?

HE. We shall not depart by a hair's breadth from the ordinary natural current of our lives. We were going to the theatre when the loss of the poems compelled us to take action at once. We shall go to the theatre still; but we shall leave your diamonds here; for we cannot afford diamonds, and do not need them.

SHE (*fretfully*). I have told you already that I hate diamonds; only Teddy insists on hanging me all over with them. You need not preach simplicity to me.

HE. I never thought of doing so, dearest: I know that these trivialities are nothing to you. What was I saying?—oh yes. Instead of coming back here from the theatre, you will come with me to my home—now and henceforth o u r home—and in due course of time, when you are divorced, we shall go through whatever idle legal ceremony you may desire. *I* attach no importance to the law: my love was not created in me by the law, nor can it be bound or loosed by it. That is simple enough, and sweet enough, is it not? (*He takes the flowers from the table.*) Here are flowers for you:

I have the tickets: we will ask your husband to lend us the carriage to shew that there is no malice, no grudge, between us. Come!

SHE (*spiritlessly, taking the flowers without looking at them, and temporizing*). Teddy isnt in yet.

HE. Well, let us take that calmly. Let us go to the theatre as if nothing had happened, and tell him when we come back. Now or three hours hence: to-day or to-morrow: what does it matter, provided all is done in honor, without shame or fear?

SHE. What did you get tickets for? Lohengrin?

HE. I tried; but Lohengrin was sold out for to-night. (*He takes out two Court Theatre tickets.*)

SHE. Then what did you get?

HE. Can you ask me? What is there besides Lohengrin that we two could endure, except Candida?

SHE (*springing up*). Candida! No, I wont go to it again, Henry (*tossing the flowers on the piano*). It is that play that has done all the mischief. I'm very sorry I ever saw it: it ought to be stopped.

HE (*amazed*). Aurora!

SHE. Yes: I mean it.

HE. That divinest love poem! the poem that gave us courage to speak to one another! that revealed to us what we really felt for one another! that—

SHE. Just so. It put a lot of stuff into my head that I should never have dreamt of for myself. I imagined myself just like Candida.

HE (*catching her hands and looking earnestly at her*). You were right. You a r e like Candida.

SHE (*snatching her hands away*). Oh, stuff! And I thought you were just like Eugene. (*Looking critically at him.*) Now that I come to look at you, you a r e rather like him, too. (*She throws herself discontentedly into the nearest seat, which happens to be the bench at the piano. He goes to her.*)

HE (*very earnestly*). Aurora: if Candida had loved

Eugene she would have gone out into the night with him without a moment's hesitation.

SHE (*with equal earnestness*). Henry: do you know whats wanting in that play?

HE. There is nothing wanting in it.

SHE. Yes there is. Theres a Georgina wanting in it. If Georgina had been there to make trouble, that play would have been a true-to-life tragedy. Now I'll tell you something about it that I have never told you before.

HE. What is that?

SHE. I took Teddy to it. I thought it would do him good; and so it would if I could only have kept him awake. Georgina came too; and you should have heard the way she went on about it. She said it was downright immoral, and that s h e knew the sort of woman that encourages boys to sit on the hearthrug and make love to her. She was just preparing Teddy's mind to poison it about me.

HE. Let us be just to Georgina, dearest—

SHE. Let her deserve it first. Just to Georgina, indeed!

HE. She really sees the world in that way. That is her punishment.

SHE. How can it be her punishment when she likes it? Itll be my punishment when she brings that budget of poems to Teddy. I wish youd have some sense, and sympathize with my position a little.

HE (*going away from the piano and beginning to walk about rather testily*). My dear: I really dont care about Georgina or about Teddy. All these squabbles belong to a plane on which I am, as you say, no use. I have counted the cost; and I do not fear the consequences. After all, what is there to fear? Where is the difficulty? What can Georgina do? What can your husband do? What can anybody do?

SHE. Do you mean to say that you propose that we

should walk right bang up to Teddy and tell him we're going away together?

HE. Yes. What can be simpler?

SHE. And do you think for a moment he'd stand it, like that half-baked clergyman in the play? He'd just kill you.

HE (*coming to a sudden stop and speaking with considerable confidence*). You dont understand these things, my darling: how could you? In one respect I am unlike the poet in the play. I have followed the Greek ideal and not neglected the culture of my body. Your husband would make a tolerable second-rate heavy weight if he were in training and ten years younger. As it is, he could, if strung up to a great effort by a burst of passion, give a good account of himself for perhaps fifteen seconds. But I am active enough to keep out of his reach for fifteen seconds; and after that I should be simply all over him.

SHE (*rising and coming to him in consternation*). What do you mean by all over him?

HE (*gently*). Dont ask me, dearest. At all events, I swear to you that you need not be anxious about m e.

SHE. And what about Teddy? Do you mean to tell me that you are going to beat Teddy before my face like a brutal prizefighter?

HE. All this alarm is needless, dearest. Believe me, nothing will happen. Your husband knows that I am capable of defending myself. Under such circumstances nothing ever does happen. And of course *I* shall do nothing. The man who once loved you is sacred to me.

SHE (*suspiciously*). Doesnt he love me still? Has he told you anything?

HE. No, no. (*He takes her tenderly in his arms.*) Dearest, dearest: how agitated you are! how unlike yourself! All these worries belong to the lower plane. Come up with me to the higher one. The heights, the solitudes, the soul world!

SHE (*avoiding his gaze*). No: stop: it's no use, Mr. Apjohn.

HE (*recoiling*). Mr. Apjohn!!!

SHE. Excuse me: I meant Henry, of course.

HE. How could you even think of m e as Mr. Apjohn? I never think of you as Mrs. Bompas: it is always Cand— I mean Aurora, Aurora, Auro—

SHE. Yes, yes: thats all very well, Mr. Apjohn (*he is about to interrupt again: but she wont have it*) no: it's no use: Ive suddenly begun to think of you as Mr. Apjohn; and it's ridiculous to go on calling you Henry. I thought you were only a boy, a child, a dreamer. I thought you would be too much afraid to do anything. And now you want to beat Teddy and to break up my home and disgrace me and make a horrible scandal in the papers. It's cruel, unmanly, cowardly.

HE (*with grave wonder*). Are you afraid?

SHE. Oh, of course I'm afraid. So would you be if you had any common sense. (*She goes to the hearth, turning her back to him, and puts one tapping foot on the fender.*)

HE (*watching her with great gravity*). Perfect love casteth out fear. That is why I am not afraid. Mrs. Bompas: you do not love me.

SHE (*turning to him with a gasp of relief*). Oh, thank you, thank you! You really can be very nice, Henry.

HE. Why do you thank me?

SHE (*coming prettily to him from the fireplace*). For calling me Mrs. Bompas again. I feel now that you are going to be reasonable and behave like a gentleman. (*He drops on the stool; covers his face with his hands; and groans.*) Whats the matter?

HE. Once or twice in my life I have dreamed that I was exquisitely happy and blessed. But oh! the misgiving at the first stir of consciousness! the stab of reality! the prison walls of the bedroom! the bitter,

bitter disappointment of waking! And this time! oh, this time I thought I was awake.

SHE. Listen to me, Henry: we really havnt time for all that sort of flapdoodle now. (*He starts to his feet as if she had pulled a trigger and straightened him by the release of a powerful spring, and goes past her with set teeth to the little table.*) Oh, take care: you nearly hit me in the chin with the top of your head.

HE (*with fierce politeness*). I beg your pardon. What is it you want me to do? I am at your service. I am ready to behave like a gentleman if you will be kind enough to explain exactly how.

SHE (*a little frightened*). Thank you, Henry: I was sure you would. Youre not angry with me, are you?

HE. Go on. Go on quickly. Give me something to think about, or I will—I will— (*he suddenly snatches up her fan and is about to break it in his clenched fists*).

SHE (*running forward and catching at the fan, with loud lamentation*). Dont break my fan—no, dont. (*He slowly relaxes his grip of it as she draws it anxiously out of his hands.*) No, really, thats a stupid trick. I dont like that. Youve no right to do that. (*She opens the fan, and finds that the sticks are disconnected.*) Oh, how could you be so inconsiderate?

HE. I beg your pardon. I will buy you a new one.

SHE (*querulously*). You will never be able to match it. And it was a particular favorite of mine.

HE (*shortly*). Then you will have to do without it: thats all.

SHE. Thats not a very nice thing to say after breaking my pet fan, I think.

HE. If you knew how near I was to breaking Teddy's pet wife and presenting him with the pieces, you would be thankful that you are alive instead of—of—of howling about fiveshillingsworth of ivory. Damn your fan!

SHE. Oh! Dont you dare swear in my presence. One would think you were my husband.

HE (*again collapsing on the stool*). This is some horrible dream. What has become of you? You are not my Aurora.

SHE. Oh, well, if you come to that, what has become of you? Do you think I would ever have encouraged you if I had known you were such a little devil?

HE. Dont drag me down—dont—dont. Help me to find the way back to the heights.

SHE (*kneeling beside him and pleading*). If you would only be reasonable, Henry. If you would only remember that I am on the brink of ruin, and not go on calmly saying it's all quite simple.

HE. It seems so to me.

SHE (*jumping up distractedly*). If you say that again I shall do something I'll be sorry for. Here we are, standing on the edge of a frightful precipice. No doubt it's quite simple to go over and have done with it. But cant you suggest anything more agreeable?

HE. I can suggest nothing now. A chill black darkness has fallen: I can see nothing but the ruins of our dream. (*He rises with a deep sigh.*)

SHE. Cant you? Well, I can. I can see Georgina rubbing those poems into Teddy. (*Facing him determinedly.*) And I tell you, Henry Apjohn, that you got me into this mess: and you must get me out of it again.

HE (*polite and hopeless*). All I can say is that I am entirely at your service. What do you wish me to do?

SHE. Do you know anybody else named Aurora?

HE. No.

SHE. Theres no use in saying No in that frozen pigheaded way. You must know some Aurora or other somewhere.

HE. You said you were the only Aurora in the world. And (*lifting his clasped fists with a sudden return of his emotion*) oh God! you were the only Aurora in the

world to me. (*He turns away from her, hiding his face.*)

SHE (*petting him*). Yes, yes, dear: of course. It's very nice of you; and I appreciate it: indeed I do; but it's not seasonable just at present. Now just listen to me. I suppose you know all those poems by heart.

HE. Yes, by h e a r t. (*Raising his head and looking at her with a sudden suspicion.*) Dont you?

SHE. Well, I never can remember verses; and besides, Ive been so busy that Ive not had time to read them all; though I intend to the very first moment I can get: I promise you that most faithfully, Henry. But now try and remember very particularly. Does the name of Bompas occur in any of the poems?

HE (*indignantly*). No.

SHE. Youre quite sure?

HE. Of course I am quite sure. How could I use such a name in a poem?

SHE. Well, I dont see why not. It rhymes to rumpus, which seems appropriate enough at present, goodness knows! However, youre a poet, and you ought to know.

HE. What does it matter—now?

SHE. It matters a lot, I can tell you. If theres nothing about Bompas in the poems, we can say that they were written to some other Aurora, and that you shewed them to me because my name was Aurora too. So youve got to invent another Aurora for the occasion.

HE (*very coldly*). Oh, if you wish me to tell a lie—

SHE. Surely, as a man of honor—as a gentleman, you wouldnt tell the truth, would you?

HE. Very well. You have broken my spirit and desecrated my dreams. I will lie and protest and stand on my honor: oh, I will play the gentleman, never fear.

SHE. Yes, put it all on me, of course. Dont be mean, Henry.

HE (*rousing himself with an effort*). You are

quite right, Mrs. Bompas: I beg your pardon. You must excuse my temper. I have got growing pains, I think.

SHE. Growing pains!

HE. The process of growing from romantic boyhood into cynical maturity usually takes fifteen years. When it is compressed into fifteen minutes, the pace is too fast; and growing pains are the result.

SHE. Oh, is this a time for cleverness? It's settled, isnt it, that youre going to be nice and good, and that youll brazen it out to Teddy that you have some other Aurora?

HE. Yes: I'm capable of anything now. I should not have told him the truth by halves; and now I will not lie by halves. I'll wallow in the honor of a gentleman.

SHE. Dearest boy, I knew you would. I— Sh! (*she rushes to the door, and holds it ajar, listening breathlessly*).

HE. What is it?

SHE (*white with apprehension*). It's Teddy: I hear him tapping the new barometer. He cant have anything serious on his mind or he wouldnt do that. Perhaps Georgina hasnt said anything. (*She steals back to the hearth.*) Try and look as if there was nothing the matter. Give me my gloves, quick. (*He hands them to her. She pulls on one hastily and begins buttoning it with ostentatious unconcern.*) Go further away from me, quick. (*He walks doggedly away from her until the piano prevents his going farther.*) If I button my glove, and you were to hum a tune, dont you think that—

HE. The tableau would be complete in its guiltiness. For Heaven's sake, Mrs. Bompas, let that glove alone: you look like a pickpocket.

Her husband comes in: a robust, thicknecked, well groomed city man, with a strong chin but a blithering

eye and credulous mouth. He has a momentous air, but shews no sign of displeasure: rather the contrary.

HER HUSBAND. Hallo! I thought you two were at the theatre.

SHE. I felt anxious about you, Teddy. Why didnt you come home to dinner?

HER HUSBAND. I got a message from Georgina. She wanted me to go to her.

SHE. Poor dear Georgina! I'm sorry I havnt been able to call on her this last week. I hope theres nothing the matter with her.

HER HUSBAND. Nothing, except anxiety for my welfare—and yours. (*She steals a terrified look at Henry.*) By the way, Apjohn, I should like a word with you this evening, if Aurora can spare you for a moment.

HE (*formally*). I am at your service.

HER HUSBAND. No hurry. After the theatre will do.

HE. We have decided not to go.

HER HUSBAND. Indeed! Well, then, shall we adjourn to my snuggery?

SHE. You neednt move. I shall go and lock up my diamonds since I'm not going to the theatre. Give me my things.

HER HUSBAND (*as he hands her the cloud and the mirror*). Well, we shall have more room here.

HE (*looking about him and shaking his shoulders loose*). I think I should prefer plenty of room.

HER HUSBAND. So, if its not disturbing you, Rory—?

SHE. Not at all. (*She goes out.*)

When the two men are alone together, Bompas deliberately takes the poems from his breast pocket; looks at them reflectively; then looks at Henry, mutely inviting his attention. Henry refuses to understand, doing his best to look unconcerned.

HER HUSBAND. Do these manuscripts seem at all familiar to you, may I ask?

HE. Manuscripts?

HER HUSBAND. Yes. Would you like to look at them a little closer? (*He proffers them under Henry's nose.*)

HE (*as with a sudden illumination of glad surprise*). Why, these are my poems!

HER HUSBAND. So I gather.

HE. What a shame! Mrs. Bompas has shewn them to you! You must think me an utter ass. I wrote them years ago after reading Swinburne's Songs Before Sunrise. Nothing would do me then but I must reel off a set of Songs to the Sunrise. Aurora, you know: the rosy fingered Aurora. Theyre all about Aurora. When Mrs. Bompas told me her name was Aurora, I couldnt resist the temptation to lend them to her to read. But I didnt bargain for your unsympathetic eyes.

HER HUSBAND (*grinning*). Apjohn: thats really very ready of you. You are cut out for literature; and the day will come when Rory and I will be proud to have you about the house. I have heard far thinner stories from much older men.

HE (*with an air of great surprise*). Do you mean to imply that you dont believe me?

HER HUSBAND. Do you expect me to believe you?

HE. Why not? I dont understand.

HER HUSBAND. Come! Dont underrate your own cleverness, Apjohn. I think you understand pretty well.

HE. I assure you I am quite at a loss. Can you not be a little more explicit?

HER HUSBAND. Dont overdo it, old chap. However, I will just be so far explicit as to say that if you think these poems read as if they were addressed, not to a live woman, but to a shivering cold time of day at which you were never out of bed in your life, you hardly do justice to your own literary powers—which I admire and appreciate, mind you, as much as any man. Come! own up. You wrote those poems to my wife. (*An internal struggle prevents Henry from answering.*) Of course you did. (*He throws the poems on the table;*

and goes to the hearthrug, where he plants himself solidly, chuckling a little and waiting for the next move.)

HE (*formally and carefully*). Mr. Bompas: I pledge you my word you are mistaken. I need not tell you that Mrs. Bompas is a lady of stainless honor, who has never cast an unworthy thought on me. The fact that she has shewn you my poems—

HER HUSBAND. Thats not a fact. I came by them without her knowledge. She didnt show them to me.

HE. Does not that prove their perfect innocence? She would have shewn them to you at once if she had taken your quite unfounded view of them.

HER HUSBAND (*shaken*). Apjohn: play fair. Dont abuse your intellectual gifts. Do you really mean that I am making a fool of myself?

HE (*earnestly*). Believe me, you are. I assure you, on my honor as a gentleman, that I have never had the slightest feeling for Mrs. Bompas beyond the ordinary esteem and regard of a pleasant acquaintance.

HER HUSBAND (*shortly, showing ill humor for the first time*). Oh, indeed. (*He leaves his hearth and begins to approach Henry slowly, looking him up and down with growing resentment.*)

HE (*hastening to improve the impression made by his mendacity*). I should never have dreamt of writing poems to her. The thing is absurd.

HER HUSBAND (*reddening ominously*). Why is it absurd?

HE (*shrugging his shoulders*). Well, it happens that I do not admire Mrs. Bompas—in that way.

HER HUSBAND (*breaking out in Henry's face*). Let me tell you that Mrs. Bompas has been admired by better men than you, you soapy headed little puppy, you.

HE (*much taken aback*). There is no need to insult me like this. I assure you, on my honor as a—

HER HUSBAND (*too angry to tolerate a reply, and*

boring Henry more and more towards the piano). You dont admire Mrs. Bompas! You would never dream of writing poems to Mrs. Bompas! My wife's not good enough for you, isnt she. (*Fiercely.*) Who are you, pray, that you should be so jolly superior?

HE. Mr. Bompas: I can make allowances for your jealousy—

HER HUSBAND. Jealousy! do you suppose I'm jealous of you? No, nor of ten like you. But if you think I'll stand here and let you insult my wife in her own house, youre mistaken.

HE (*very uncomfortable with his back against the piano and Teddy standing over him threateningly*). How can I convince you? Be reasonable. I tell you my relations with Mrs. Bompas are relations of perfect coldness—of indifference—

HER HUSBAND (*scornfully*). Say it again: say it again. Youre proud of it, arnt you? Yah! youre not worth kicking.

Henry suddenly executes the feat known to pugilists as slipping, and changes sides with Teddy, who is now between Henry and the piano.

HE. Look here: I'm not going to stand this.

HER HUSBAND. Oh, you have some blood in your body after all! Good job!

HE. This is ridiculous. I assure you Mrs. Bompas is quite—

HER HUSBAND. What is Mrs. Bompas to you, I'd like to know. I'll tell you what Mrs. Bompas is. Shes the smartest woman in the smartest set in South Kensington, and the handsomest, and the cleverest, and the most fetching to experienced men who know a good thing when they see it, whatever she may be to conceited penny-a-lining puppies who think nothing good enough for them. It's admitted by the best people; and not to know it argues yourself unknown. Three of our first actor-managers have offered her a hundred

a week if she'll go on the stage when they start a repertory theatre; and I think they know what theyre about as well as you. The only member of the present Cabinet that you might call a handsome man has neglected the business of the country to dance with her, though he dont belong to our set as a regular thing. One of the first professional poets in Bedford Park wrote a sonnet to her, worth all your amateur trash. At Ascot last season the eldest son of a duke excused himself from calling on me on the ground that his feelings for Mrs. Bompas were not consistent with his duty to me as host; and it did him honor and me too. But (*with gathering fury*) she isnt good enough for y o u, it seems. You regard her with coldness, with indifference; and you have the cool cheek to tell me so to my face. For two pins I'd flatten your nose in to teach you manners. Introducing a fine woman to you is casting pearls before swine (*yelling at him*) before SWINE! d'ye hear?

HE (*with a deplorable lack of polish*). You call me a swine again and I'll land you one on the chin thatll make your head sing for a week.

HER HUSBAND (*exploding*). What—!

He charges at Henry with bull-like fury. Henry places himself on guard in the manner of a well taught boxer, and gets away smartly, but unfortunately forgets the stool which is just behind him. He falls backwards over it, unintentionally pushing it against the shins of Bompas, who falls forward over it. Mrs. Bompas, with a scream, rushes into the room between the sprawling champions, and sits down on the floor in order to get her right arm round her husband's neck.

SHE. You shant, Teddy: you shant. You will be killed: he is a prizefighter.

HER HUSBAND (*vengefully*). I'll prizefight him. (*He struggles vainly to free himself from her embrace.*)

SHE. Henry: dont let him fight you. Promise me that you wont.

HE (*ruefully*). I have got a most frightful bump on the back of my head. (*He tries to rise.*)

SHE (*reaching out her left hand to seize his coat tail, and pulling him down again, whilst keeping fast hold of Teddy with the other hand*). Not until you have promised: not until you both have promised. (*Teddy rises to rise: she pulls him back again.*) Teddy: you promise, dont you? Yes, yes. Be good: you promise.

HER HUSBAND. I wont, unless he takes it back.

SHE. He will: he does. You take it back, Henry? —yes.

He (*savagely*). Yes. I take it back. (*She lets go his coat. He gets up. So does Teddy.*) I take it all back, all, without reserve.

SHE (*on the carpet*). Is nobody going to help me up? (*They each take a hand and pull her up.*) Now wont you shake hands and be good?

HE (*recklessly*). I shall do nothing of the sort. I have steeped myself in lies for your sake; and the only reward I get is a lump on the back of my head the size of an apple. Now I will go back to the straight path.

SHE. Henry: for Heaven's sake—

HE. It's no use. Your husband is a fool and a brute—

HER HUSBAND. Whats that you say?

HE. I say you are a fool and a brute; and if youll step outside with me I'll say it again. (*Teddy begins to take off his coat for combat.*) Those poems were written to your wife, every word of them, and to nobody else. (*The scowl clears away from Bompas's countenance. Radiant, he replaces his coat.*) I wrote them because I loved her. I thought her the most beautiful woman in the world; and I told her so over

and over again. I adored her: do you hear? I told her that you were a sordid commercial chump, utterly unworthy of her; and so you are.

HER HUSBAND (*so gratified, he can hardly believe his ears*). You dont mean it!

HE. Yes, I do mean it, and a lot more too. I asked Mrs. Bompas to walk out of the house with me—to leave you—to get divorced from you and marry me. I begged and implored her to do it this very night. It was her refusal that ended everything between us. (*Looking very disparagingly at him.*) What she can see in you, goodness only knows!

HER HUSBAND (*beaming with remorse*). My dear chap, why didnt you say so before? I apologize. Come! dont bear malice: shake hands. Make him shake hands, Rory.

SHE. For my sake, Henry. After all, hes my husband. Forgive him. Take his hand. (*Henry, dazed, lets her take his hand and place it in Teddy's.*)

HER HUSBAND (*shaking it heartily*). Youve got to own that none of your literary heroines can touch my Rory. (*He turns to her and claps her with fond pride on the shoulder.*) Eh, Rory? They cant resist you: none of em. Never knew a man yet that could hold out three days.

SHE. Dont be foolish, Teddy. I hope you were not really hurt, Henry. (*She feels the back of his head. He flinches.*) Oh, poor boy, what a bump! I must get some vinegar and brown paper. (*She goes to the bell and rings.*)

HER HUSBAND. Will you do me a great favor, Ap- . I hardly like to ask; but it would be a real kindness to us both.

HE. What can I do?

HER HUSBAND (*taking up the poems*). Well, may I get these printed? It shall be done in the best style. The finest paper, sumptuous binding, everything first

class. Theyre beautiful poems. I should like to shew them about a bit.

SHE (*running back from the bell, delighted with the idea, and coming between them*). Oh Henry, if you wouldnt mind!

HE. Oh, *I* dont mind. I am past minding anything. I have grown too fast this evening.

SHE. How old are you, Henry?

HE. This morning I was eighteen. Now I am—confound it! I'm quoting that beast of a play (*he takes the Candida tickets out of his pocket and tears them up viciously*).

HER HUSBAND. What shall we call the volume. To Aurora, or something like that, eh?

HE. I should call it How He Lied to Her Husband.

CURTAIN.

THE MAN OF DESTINY

THE MAN OF DESTINY

The twelfth of May, 1796, in north Italy, at Tavazzano, on the road from Lodi to Milan. The afternoon sun is blazing serenely over the plains of Lombardy, treating the Alps with respect and the anthills with indulgence, not incommoded by the basking of the swine and oxen in the villages nor hurt by its cool reception in the churches, but fiercely disdainful of two hordes of mischievous insects which are the French and Austrian armies. Two days before, at Lodi, the Austrians tried to prevent the French from crossing the river by the narrow bridge there; but the French, commanded by a general aged 27, Napoleon Bonaparte, who does not understand the art of war, rushed the fireswept bridge, supported by a tremendous cannonade in which the young general assisted with his own hands. Cannonading is his technical specialty; he has been trained in the artillery under the old régime, and made perfect in the military arts of shirking his duties, swindling the paymaster over travelling expenses, and dignifying war with the noise and smoke of cannon, as depicted in all military portraits. He is, however, an original observer, ana has perceived, for the first time since the invention of gunpowder, that a cannon ball, if it strikes a man, will kill him. To a thorough grasp of this remarkable discovery, he adds a highly evolved faculty for physical geography and for the calculation of times and distances. He has prodigious powers of work, and a clear, realistic knowledge of human nature in public affairs, having seen it exhaustively tested in that department during the French

Revolution. He is imaginative without illusions, and creative without religion, loyalty, patriotism or any of the common ideals. Not that he is incapable of these ideals: on the contrary, he has swallowed them all in his boyhood, and now, having a keen dramatic faculty, is extremely clever at playing upon them by the arts of the actor and stage manager. Withal, he is no spoiled child. Poverty, ill-luck, the shifts of impecunious shabby-gentility, repeated failure as a would-be author, humiliation as a rebuffed time server, reproof and punishment as an incompetent and dishonest officer, an escape from dismissal from the service so narrow that if the emigration of the nobles had not raised the value of even the most rascally lieutenant to the famine price of a general he would have been swept contemptuously from the army: these trials have ground the conceit out of him, and forced him to be self-sufficient and to understand that to such men as he is the world will give nothing that he cannot take from it by force. In this the world is not free from cowardice and folly; for Napoleon, as a merciless cannonader of political rubbish, is making himself useful: indeed, it is even now impossible to live in England without sometimes feeling how much that country lost in not being conquered by him as well as by Julius Cæsar.

However, on this May afternoon in 1796, it is early days with him. He is only 26, and has but recently become a general, partly by using his wife to seduce the Directory (then governing France) partly by the scarcity of officers caused by the emigration as aforesaid; partly by his faculty of knowing a country, with all its roads, rivers, hills and valleys, as he knows the palm of his hand; and largely by that new faith of his in the efficacy of firing cannons at people. His army is, as to discipline, in a state which has so greatly shocked some modern writers before whom the following story has been enacted, that they, impressed with the later glory of "L' Empereur," have altogether refused to credit it. But Napoleon is not "L' Empereur" yet: he has only just been dubbed "Le Petit Caporal,"

and is in the stage of gaining influence over his men by displays of pluck. He is not in a position to force his will on them, in orthodox military fashion, by the cat o' nine tails. The French Revolution, which has escaped suppression solely through the monarchy's habit of being at least four years in arrear with its soldiers in the matter of pay, has substituted for that habit, as far as possible, the habit of not paying at all, except in promises and patriotic flatteries which are not compatible with martial law of the Prussian type. Napoleon has therefore approached the Alps in command of men without money, in rags, and consequently indisposed to stand much discipline, especially from upstart generals. This circumstance, which would have embarrassed an idealist soldier, has been worth a thousand cannon to Napoleon. He has said to his army, "You have patriotism and courage; but you have no money, no clothes, and deplorably indifferent food. In Italy there are all these things, and glory as well, to be gained by a devoted army led by a general who regards loot as the natural right of the soldier. I am such a general. En avant, mes enfants!" The result has entirely justified him. The army conquers Italy as the locusts conquered Cyprus. They fight all day and march all night, covering impossible distances and appearing in incredible places, not because every soldier carries a field marshal's baton in his knapsack, but because he hopes to carry at least half a dozen silver forks there next day.

It must be understood, by the way, that the French army does not make war on the Italians. It is there to rescue them from the tyranny of their Austrian conquerors, and confer republican institutions on them; so that in incidentally looting them, it merely makes free with the property of its friends, who ought to be grateful to it, and perhaps would be if ingratitude were not the proverbial failing of their country. The Austrians, whom it fights, are a thoroughly respectable regular army, well disciplined, commanded by gentlemen trained and versed in the art of war: at the head of them Beaulieu, practising

the classic art of war under orders from Vienna, and getting horribly beaten by Napoleon, who acts on his own responsibility in defiance of professional precedents or orders from Paris. Even when the Austrians win a battle, all that is necessary is to wait until their routine obliges them to return to their quarters for afternoon tea, so to speak, and win it back again from them: a course pursued later on with brilliant success at Marengo. On the whole, with his foe handicapped by Austrian statesmanship, classic generalship, and the exigencies of the aristocratic social structure of Viennese society, Napoleon finds it possible to be irresistible without working heroic miracles. The world, however, likes miracles and heroes, and is quite incapable of conceiving the action of such forces as academic militarism or Viennese drawing-roomism. Hence it has already begun to manufacture "L' Empereur," and thus to make it difficult for the romanticists of a hundred years later to credit the little scene now in question at Tavazzano as aforesaid.

The best quarters at Tavazzano are at a little inn, the first house reached by travellers passing through the place from Milan to Lodi. It stands in a vineyard; and its principal room, a pleasant refuge from the summer heat, is open so widely at the back to this vineyard that it is almost a large veranda. The bolder children, much excited by the alarums and excursions of the past few days, and by an irruption of French troops at six o' clock, know that the French commander has quartered himself in this room, and are divided between a craving to peep in at the front windows and a mortal terror of the sentinel, a young gentleman-soldier, who, having no natural moustache, has had a most ferocious one painted on his face with boot blacking by his sergeant. As his heavy uniform, like all the uniforms of that day, is designed for parade without the least reference to his health or comfort, he perspires profusely in the sun; and his painted moustache has run in little streaks down his chin and round his neck except where it has dried in

stiff japanned flakes, and had its sweeping outline chipped off in grotesque little bays and headlands, making him unspeakably ridiculous in the eye of History a hundred years later, but monstrous and horrible to the contemporary north Italian infant, to whom nothing would seem more natural than that he should relieve the monotony of his guard by pitchforking a stray child up on his bayonet, and eating it uncooked. Nevertheless one girl of bad character, in whom an instinct of privilege with soldiers is already dawning, does peep in at the safest window for a moment, before a glance and a clink from the sentinel sends her flying. Most of what she sees she has seen before: the vineyard at the back, with the old winepress and a cart among the vines; the door close down on her right leading to the inn entry; the landlord's best sideboard, now in full action for dinner, further back on the same side; the fireplace on the other side, with a couch near it, and another door, leading to the inner rooms, between it and the vineyard; and the table in the middle with its repast of Milanese risotto, cheese, grapes, bread, olives, and a big wickered flask of red wine.

The landlord, Giuseppe Grandi, is also no novelty. He is a swarthy, vivacious, shrewdly cheerful, black-curled, bullet-headed, grinning little man of 40. Naturally an excellent host, he is in quite special spirits this evening at his good fortune in having the French commander as his guest to protect him against the license of the troops, and actually sports a pair of gold earrings which he would otherwise have hidden carefully under the winepress with his little equipment of silver plate.

Napoleon, sitting facing her on the further side of the table, and Napoleon's hat, sword and riding whip lying on the couch, she sees for the first time. He is working hard, partly at his meal, which he has discovered how to dispatch, by attacking all the courses simultaneously, in ten minutes (this practice is the beginning of his downfall), and partly at a map which he is correcting from memory, occasionally marking

the position of the forces by taking a grapeskin from his mouth and planting it on the map with his thumb like a wafer. He has a supply of writing materials before him mixed up in disorder with the dishes and cruets; and his long hair gets sometimes into the risotto gravy and sometimes into the ink.

GIUSEPPE. Will your excellency—

NAPOLEON (*intent on his map, but cramming himself mechanically with his left hand*). Don't talk. I'm busy.

GIUSEPPE (*with perfect goodhumor*). Excellency: I obey.

NAPOLEON. Some red ink.

GIUSEPPE. Alas! excellency, there is none.

NAPOLEON (*with Corsican facetiousness*). Kill something and bring me its blood.

GIUSEPPE (*grinning*). There is nothing but your excellency's horse, the sentinel, the lady upstairs, and my wife.

NAPOLEON. Kill your wife.

GIUSEPPE. Willingly, your excellency; but unhappily I am not strong enough. She would kill me.

NAPOLEON. That will do equally well.

GIUSEPPE. Your excellency does me too much honor. (*Stretching his hand toward the flask.*) Perhaps some wine will answer your excellency's purpose.

NAPOLEON (*hastily protecting the flask, and becoming quite serious*). Wine! No: that would be waste. You are all the same: waste! waste! waste! (*He marks the map with gravy, using his fork as a pen.*) Clear away. (*He finishes his wine; pushes back his chair; and uses his napkin, stretching his legs and leaning back, but still frowning and thinking.*)

GIUSEPPE (*clearing the table and removing the things to a tray on the sideboard*). Every man to his trade, excellency. We innkeepers have plenty of cheap wine: we think nothing of spilling it. You great generals have plenty of cheap blood: you think nothing of spilling it. Is it not so, excellency?

NAPOLEON. Blood costs nothing: wine costs money. (*He rises and goes to the fireplace.*)

GIUSEPPE. They say you are careful of everything except human life, excellency.

NAPOLEON. Human life, my friend, is the only thing that takes care of itself. (*He throws himself at his ease on the couch.*)

GIUSEPPE (*admiring him*). Ah, excellency, what fools we all are beside you! If I could only find out the secret of your success!

NAPOLEON. You would make yourself Emperor of Italy, eh?

GIUSEPPE. Too troublesome, excellency: I leave all that to you. Besides, what would become of my inn if I were Emperor? See how you enjoy looking on at me whilst I keep the inn for you and wait on you! Well, I shall enjoy looking on at you whilst you become Emperor of Europe, and govern the country for me. (*Whilst he chatters, he takes the cloth off without removing the map and inkstand, and takes the corners in his hands and the middle of the edge in his mouth, to fold it up.*)

NAPOLEON. Emperor of Europe, eh? Why only Europe?

GIUSEPPE. Why, indeed? Emperor of the world, excellency! Why not? (*He folds and rolls up the cloth, emphasizing his phrases by the steps of the process.*) One man is like another (*fold*): one country is like another (*fold*): one battle is like another. (*At the last fold, he slaps the cloth on the table and deftly rolls it up, adding, by way of peroration*) Conquer one: conquer all. (*He takes the cloth to the sideboard, and puts it in a drawer.*)

NAPOLEON. And govern for all; fight for all; be everybody's servant under cover of being everybody's master. Giuseppe.

GIUSEPPE (*at the sideboard*). Excellency.

NAPOLEON. I forbid you to talk to me about myself.

GIUSEPPE (*coming to the foot of the couch*). Pardon. Your

excellency is so unlike other great men. It is the subject they like best.

NAPOLEON. Well, talk to me about the subject they like next best, whatever that may be.

GIUSEPPE (*unabashed*). Willingly, your excellency. Has your excellency by any chance caught a glimpse of the lady upstairs? (*Napoleon promptly sits up and looks at him with an interest which entirely justifies the implied epigram.*)

NAPOLEON. How old is she?

GIUSEPPE. The right age, excellency.

NAPOLEON. Do you mean seventeen or thirty?

GIUSEPPE. Thirty, excellency.

NAPOLEON. Goodlooking?

GIUSEPPE. I cannot see with your excellency's eyes: every man must judge that for himself. In my opinion, excellency, a fine figure of a lady. (*Slyly.*) Shall I lay the table for her collation here?

NAPOLEON (*brusquely, rising*). No: lay nothing here until the officer for whom I am waiting comes back. (*He looks at his watch, and takes to walking to and fro between the fireplace and the vineyard.*)

GIUSEPPE (*with conviction*). Excellency: believe me, he has been captured by the accursed Austrians. He dare not keep you waiting if he were at liberty.

NAPOLEON (*turning at the edge of the shadow of the veranda*). Giuseppe: if that turns out to be true, it will put me into such a temper that nothing short of hanging you and your whole household, including the lady upstairs, will satisfy me.

GIUSEPPE. We are all cheerfully at your excellency's disposal, except the lady. I cannot answer for her; but no lady could resist you, General.

NAPOLEON (*sourly, resuming his march*). Hm! You will never be hanged. There is no satisfaction in hanging a man who does not object to it.

GIUSEPPE (*sympathetically*). Not the least in the world, excellency: is there? (*Napoleon again looks at his watch, evidently growing anxious.*) Ah, one can see that you are a great man, General: you know how to wait. If it were a corporal now, or a sub-lieutenant, at the end of three minutes he would be swearing, fuming, threatening, pulling the house about our ears.

NAPOLEON. Giuseppe: your flatteries are insufferable. Go and talk outside. (*He sits down again at the table, with his jaws in his hands, and his elbows propped on the map, poring over it with a troubled expression.*)

GIUSEPPE. Willingly, your excellency. You shall not be disturbed. (*He takes up the tray and prepares to withdraw.*)

NAPOLEON. The moment he comes back, send him to me.

GIUSEPPE. Instantaneously, your excellency.

A LADY'S VOICE (*calling from some distant part of the inn*). Giusep-pe! (*The voice is very musical, and the two final notes make an ascending interval.*)

NAPOLEON (*startled*). What's that? What's that?

GIUSEPPE (*resting the end of his tray on the table and leaning over to speak the more confidentially*). The lady, excellency.

NAPOLEON (*absently*). Yes. What lady? Whose lady?

GIUSEPPE. The strange lady, excellency.

NAPOLEON. What strange lady?

GIUSEPPE (*with a shrug*). Who knows? She arrived here half an hour before you in a hired carriage belonging to the Golden Eagle at Borghetto. Actually by herself, excellency. No servants. A dressing bag and a trunk: that is all. The postillion says she left a horse—a charger, with military trappings, at the Golden Eagle.

NAPOLEON. A woman with a charger! That's extraordinary.

THE LADY'S VOICE (*the two final notes now making a peremptory descending interval*). Giuseppe!

NAPOLEON (*rising to listen*). That's an interesting voice.

GIUSEPPE. She is an interesting lady, excellency. (*Calling.*) Coming, lady, coming. (*He makes for the inner door.*)

NAPOLEON (*arresting him with a strong hand on his shoulder*). Stop. Let her come.

VOICE. Giuseppe!! (*Impatiently.*)

GIUSEPPE (*pleadingly*). Let me go, excellency. It is my point of honor as an innkeeper to come when I am called. I appeal to you as a soldier.

A MAN'S VOICE (*outside, at the inn door, shouting*). Here, someone. Hollo! Landlord. Where are you? (*Somebody raps vigorously with a whip handle on a bench in the passage.*)

NAPOLEON (*suddenly becoming the commanding officer again and throwing Giuseppe off*). There he is at last. (*Pointing to the inner door.*) Go. Attend to your business: the lady is calling you. (*He goes to the fireplace and stands with his back to it with a determined military air.*)

GIUSEPPE (*with bated breath, snatching up his tray*). Certainly, excellency. (*He hurries out by the inner door.*)

THE MAN'S VOICE (*impatiently*). Are you all asleep here? (*The door opposite the fireplace is kicked rudely open; and a dusty sub-lieutenant bursts into the room. He is a chuckle-headed young man of 24, with the fair, delicate, clear skin of a man of rank, and a self-assurance on that ground which the French Revolution has failed to shake in the smallest degree. He has a thick silly lip, an eager credulous eye, an obstinate nose, and a loud confident voice. A young man without fear, without reverence, without imagination, without sense, hopelessly insusceptible to the Napoleonic or any other idea, stupendously egotistical, eminently qualified to rush in where angels fear to tread, yet of a vigorous babbling vitality which bustles him into the thick of things. He is just now boiling with vexation, attributable by a superficial observer to his impatience at not being promptly attended to by the staff of the inn, but in which a more discerning eye can perceive a certain moral depth, indicating a more permanent and momentous*

grievance. On seeing Napoleon, he is sufficiently taken aback to check himself and salute; but he does not betray by his manner any of that prophetic consciousness of Marengo and Austerlitz, Waterloo and St. Helena, or the Napoleonic pictures of Delaroche and Meissonier, which modern culture will instinctively expect from him.)

NAPOLEON (*sharply*). Well, sir, here you are at last. Your instructions were that I should arrive here at six, and that I was to find you waiting for me with my mail from Paris and with despatches. It is now twenty minutes to eight. You were sent on this service as a hard rider with the fastest horse in the camp. You arrive a hundred minutes late, on foot. Where is your horse!

THE LIEUTENANT (*moodily pulling off his gloves and dashing them with his cap and whip on the table*). Ah! where indeed? That's just what I should like to know, General. (*With emotion.*) You don't know how fond I was of that horse.

NAPOLEON (*angrily sarcastic*). Indeed! (*With sudden misgiving.*) Where are the letters and despatches?

THE LIEUTENANT (*importantly, rather pleased than otherwise at having some remarkable news*). I don't know.

NAPOLEON (*unable to believe his ears*). You don't know!

LIEUTENANT. No more than you do, General. Now I suppose I shall be court-martialled. Well, I don't mind being court-martialled; but (*with solemn determination*) I tell you, General, if ever I catch that innocent looking youth, I'll spoil his beauty, the slimy little liar! I'll make a picture of him. I'll—

NAPOLEON (*advancing from the hearth to the table*). What innocent looking youth? Pull yourself together, sir, will you; and give an account of yourself.

LIEUTENANT (*facing him at the opposite side of the table, leaning on it with his fists*). Oh, I'm all right, General: I'm perfectly ready to give an account of myself. I shall make the court-martial thoroughly understand that the fault

was not mine. Advantage has been taken of the better side of my nature; and I'm not ashamed of it. But with all respect to you as my commanding officer, General, I say again that if ever I set eyes on that son of Satan, I'll—

NAPOLEON (*angrily*). So you said before.

LIEUTENANT (*drawing himself upright*). I say it again. Just wait until I catch him. Just wait: that's all. (*He folds his arms resolutely, and breathes hard, with compressed lips.*)

NAPOLEON. I a m waiting, sir—for your explanation.

LIEUTENANT (*confidently*). You'll change your tone, General, when you hear what has happened to me.

NAPOLEON. Nothing has happened to you, sir: you are alive and not disabled. Where are the papers entrusted to you?

LIEUTENANT. Nothing! Nothing!! Oho! Well, we'll see. (*Posing himself to overwhelm Napoleon with his news.*) He swore eternal brotherhood with me. Was that nothing? He said my eyes reminded him of his sister's eyes. Was that nothing? He cried—actually cried—over the story of my separation from Angelica. Was that nothing? He paid for both bottles of wine, though he only ate bread and grapes himself. Perhaps you call that nothing! He gave me his pistols and his horse and his despatches—most important despatches—and let me go away with them. (*Triumphantly, seeing that he has reduced Napoleon to blank stupefaction.*) Was t h a t nothing?

NAPOLEON (*enfeebled by astonishment*). What did he do that for?

LIEUTENANT (*as if the reason were obvious*). To shew his confidence in me. (*Napoleon's jaw does not exactly drop; but its hinges become nerveless. The Lieutenant proceeds with honest indignation.*) And I was worthy of his confidence: I brought them all back honorably. But would you believe it?—when I trusted him with m y pistols, and m y horse, and m y despatches—

NAPOLEON (*enraged*). What the devil did you do that for?

LIEUTENANT. Why, to shew my confidence in him, of course. And he betrayed it—abused it—never came back. The thief! the swindler! the heartless, treacherous little blackguard! You call that nothing, I suppose. But look here, General: (*again resorting to the table with his fist for greater emphasis*) y o u may put up with this outrage from the Austrians if you like; but speaking for myself personally, I tell you that if ever I catch—

NAPOLEON (*turning on his heel in disgust and irritably resuming his march to and fro*). Yes: you have said that more than once already.

LIEUTENANT (*excitedly*). More than once! I'll say it fifty times; and what's more, I'll d o it. You'll see, General. I'll shew my confidence in him, so I will. I'll—

NAPOLEON. Yes, yes, sir: no doubt you will. What kind of man was he?

LIEUTENANT. Well, I should think you ought to be able to tell from his conduct the sort of man he was.

NAPOLEON. Psh! What was he like?

LIEUTENANT. Like! He's like—well, you ought to have just seen the fellow: that will give you a notion of what he was like. He won't be like it five minutes after I catch him; for I tell you that if ever—

NAPOLEON (*shouting furiously for the innkeeper*). Giuseppe! (*To the Lieutenant, out of all patience.*) Hold your tongue, sir, if you can.

LIEUTENANT. I warn you it's no use to try to put the blame on me. (*Plaintively.*) How was I to know the sort of fellow he was? (*He takes a chair from between the sideboard and the outer door; places it near the table; and sits down.*) If you only knew how hungry and tired I am, you'd have more consideration.

GIUSEPPE (*returning*). What is it, excellency?

NAPOLEON (*struggling with his temper*). Take this—this officer. Feed him; and put him to bed, if necessary. When he is in his right mind again, find out what has happened to him and bring me word. (*To the Lieutenant.*) Consider yourself under arrest, sir.

LIEUTENANT (*with sulky stiffness*). I was prepared for that. It takes a gentleman to understand a gentleman. (*He throws his sword on the table. Giuseppe takes it up and politely offers it to Napoleon, who throws it violently on the couch.*)

GIUSEPPE (*with sympathetic concern*). Have you been attacked by the Austrians, lieutenant? Dear, dear, dear!

LIEUTENANT (*contemptuously*). Attacked! I could have broken his back between my finger and thumb. I wish I had, now. No: it was by appealing to the better side of my nature: that's what I can't get over. He said he'd never met a man he liked so much as me. He put his handkerchief round my neck because a gnat bit me, and my stock was chafing it. Look! (*He pulls a handkerchief from his stock. Giuseppe takes it and examines it.*)

GIUSEPPE (*to Napoleon*). A lady's handkerchief, excellency. (*He smells it.*) Perfumed!

NAPOLEON. Eh? (*He takes it and looks at it attentively.*) Hm! (*He smells it.*) Ha! (*He walks thoughtfully across the room, looking at the handkerchief, which he finally sticks in the breast of his coat.*)

LIEUTENANT. Good enough for him, anyhow. I noticed that he had a woman's hands when he touched my neck, with his coaxing, fawning ways, the mean, effeminate little hound. (*Lowering his voice with thrilling intensity.*) But mark my words, General. If ever—

THE LADY'S VOICE (*outside, as before*). Giuseppe!

LIEUTENANT (*petrified*). What was that?

GIUSEPPE. Only a lady upstairs, lieutenant, calling me.

LIEUTENANT. Lady!

VOICE. Giuseppe, Giuseppe: where a r e you?

LIEUTENANT (*murderously*). Give me that sword. (*He strides to the couch; snatches the sword; and draws it.*)

GIUSEPPE (*rushing forward and seizing his right arm.*) What are you thinking of, lieutenant? It's a lady: don't you hear that it's a woman's voice?

LIEUTENANT. It's h i s voice, I tell you. Let me go. (*He breaks away, and rushes to the inner door. It opens in his face; and the Strange Lady steps in. She is a very attractive lady, tall and extraordinarily graceful, with a delicately intelligent, apprehensive, questioning face—perception in the brow, sensitiveness in the nostrils, character in the chin: all keen, refined, and original. She is very feminine, but by no means weak: the lithe, tender figure is hung on a strong frame: the hands and feet, neck and shoulders, are no fragile ornaments, but of full size in proportion to her stature, which considerably exceeds that of Napoleon and the innkeeper, and leaves her at no disadvantage with the lieutenant. Only, her elegance and radiant charm keep the secret of her size and strength. She is not, judging by her dress, an admirer of the latest fashions of the Directory; or perhaps she uses up her old dresses for travelling. At all events she wears no jacket with extravagant lappels, no Greco-Tallien sham chiton, nothing, indeed, that the Princesse de Lamballe might not have worn. Her dress of flowered silk is long waisted, with a Watteau pleat behind, but with the paniers reduced to mere rudiments, as she is too tall for them. It is cut low in the neck, where it is eked out by a creamy fichu. She is fair, with golden brown hair and grey eyes.*

She enters with the self-possession of a woman accustomed to the privileges of rank and beauty. The innkeeper, who has excellent natural manners, is highly appreciative of her. Napoleon, on whom her eyes first fall, is instantly smitten self-conscious. His color deepens: he becomes stiffer and less at ease than before. She perceives this instantly, and, not to

embarrass him, turns in an infinitely well bred manner to pay the respect of a glance to the other gentleman, who is staring at her dress, as at the earth's final masterpiece of treacherous dissimulation, with feelings altogether inexpressible and indescribable. As she looks at him, she becomes deadly pale. There is no mistaking her expression: a revelation of some fatal error, utterly unexpected, has suddenly appalled her in the midst of tranquillity, security and victory. The next moment a wave of color rushes up from beneath the creamy fichu and drowns her whole face. One can see that she is blushing all over her body. Even the lieutenant, ordinarily incapable of observation, and just now lost in the tumult of his wrath, can see a thing when it is painted red for him. Interpreting the blush as the involuntary confession of black deceit confronted with its victim, he points to it with a loud crow of retributive triumph, and then, seizing her by the wrist, pulls her past him into the room as he claps the door to, and plants himself with his back to it.)

LIEUTENANT. So I've got you, my lad. So you've disguised yourself, have you? (*In a voice of thunder.*) Take off that skirt.

GIUSEPPE (*remonstrating*). Oh, lieutenant!

LADY (*affrighted, but highly indignant at his having dared to touch her*). Gentlemen: I appeal to you. Giuseppe. (*Making a movement as if to run to Giuseppe.*)

LIEUTENANT (*interposing, sword in hand*). No you don't.

LADY (*taking refuge with Napoleon*). Oh, sir, you are an officer—a general. You will protect me, will you not?

LIEUTENANT. Never you mind him, General. Leave me to deal with him.

NAPOLEON. With him! With whom, sir? Why do you treat this lady in such a fashion?

LIEUTENANT. Lady! He's a man! the man I shewed my confidence in. (*Advancing threateningly.*) Here you—

LADY (*running behind Napoleon and in her agitation em-*

bracing the arm which he instinctively extends before her as a fortification). Oh, thank you, General. Keep him away.

NAPOLEON. Nonsense, sir. This is certainly a lady (*she suddenly drops his arm and blushes again*); and you are under arrest. Put down your sword, sir, instantly.

LIEUTENANT. General: I tell you he's an Austrian spy. He passed himself off on me as one of General Masséna's staff this afternoon; and now he's passing himself off on you as a woman. Am I to believe my own eyes or not?

LADY. General: it must be my brother. He is on General Masséna's staff. He is very like me.

LIEUTENANT (*his mind giving way*). Do you mean to say that you're not your brother, but your sister?—the sister who was so like me?—who had my beautiful blue eyes? It was a lie: your eyes are not like mine: they're exactly like your own. What perfidy!

NAPOLEON. Lieutenant: will you obey my orders and leave the room, since you are convinced at last that this is no gentleman?

LIEUTENANT. Gentleman! I should think not. No gentleman would have abused my confi—

NAPOLEON (*out of all patience*). Enough, sir, enough. Will you leave the room. I order you to leave the room.

LADY. Oh, pray let me go instead.

NAPOLEON (*drily*). Excuse me, madame. With all respect to your brother, I do not yet understand what an officer on General Masséna's staff wants with my letters. I have some questions to put to you.

GIUSEPPE (*discreetly*). Come, lieutenant. (*He opens the door.*)

LIEUTENANT. I'm off. General: take warning by me: be on your guard against the better side of your nature. (*To the lady.*) Madame: my apologies. I thought you were the same person, only of the opposite sex; and that naturally misled me.

LADY (*sweetly*). It was not your fault, was it? I'm so glad you're not angry with me any longer, lieutenant. (*She offers her hand.*)

LIEUTENANT (*bending gallantly to kiss it*). Oh, madam, not the lea— (*Checking himself and looking at it.*) You have your brother's hand. And the same sort of ring.

LADY (*sweetly*). We are twins.

LIEUTENANT. That accounts for it. (*He kisses her hand.*) A thousand pardons. I didn't mind about the despatches at all: that's more the General's affair than mine: it was the abuse of my confidence through the better side of my nature. (*Taking his cap, gloves, and whip from the table and going.*) You'll excuse my leaving you, General, I hope. Very sorry, I'm sure. (*He talks himself out of the room. Giuseppe follows him and shuts the door.*)

NAPOLEON (*looking after them with concentrated irritation*). Idiot! (*The Strange Lady smiles sympathetically. He comes frowning down the room between the table and the fireplace, all his awkwardness gone now that he is alone with her.*)

LADY. How can I thank you, General, for your protection?

NAPOLEON (*turning on her suddenly*). My despatches: come! (*He puts out his hand for them.*)

LADY. General! (*She involuntarily puts her hands on her fichu as if to protect something there.*)

NAPOLEON. You tricked that blockhead out of them. You disguised yourself as a man. I want my despatches. They are there in the bosom of your dress, under your hands.

LADY (*quickly removing her hands*). Oh, how unkindly you are speaking to me! (*She takes her handkerchief from her fichu.*) You frighten me. (*She touches her eyes as if to wipe away a tear.*)

NAPOLEON. I see you don't know me madam, or you would save yourself the trouble of pretending to cry.

LADY (*producing an effect of smiling through her tears*). Yes, I do know you. You are the famous General Buona-

parte. (*She gives the name a marked Italian pronunciation—Bwaw-na-parr-te.*)

NAPOLEON (*angrily, with the French pronunciation*). Bonaparte, madame, Bonaparte. The papers, if you please.

LADY. But I assure you— (*He snatches the handkerchief rudely from her.*) General! (*Indignantly.*)

NAPOLEON (*taking the other handkerchief from his breast*). You were good enough to lend one of your handkerchiefs to my lieutenant when you robbed him. (*He looks at the two handkerchiefs.*) They match one another. (*He smells them.*) The same scent. (*He flings them down on the table.*) I am waiting for the despatches. I shall take them, if necessary, with as little ceremony as the handkerchief. (*This historical incident was used eighty years later, by M. Victorien Sardou, in his drama entitled "Dora."*)

LADY (*in dignified reproof*). General: do you threaten women?

NAPOLEON (*bluntly*). Yes.

LADY (*disconcerted, trying to gain time*). But I don't understand. I—

NAPOLEON. You understand perfectly. You came here because your Austrian employers calculated that I was six leagues away. I am always to be found where my enemies don't expect me. You have walked into the lion's den. Come: you are a brave woman. Be a sensible one: I have no time to waste. The papers. (*He advances a step ominously*).

LADY (*breaking down in the childish rage of impotence, and throwing herself in tears on the chair left beside the table by the lieutenant*). *I* brave! How little you know! I have spent the day in an agony of fear. I have a pain here from the tightening of my heart at every suspicious look, every threatening movement. Do you think every one is as brave as you? Oh, why will not you brave people do the brave things? Why do you leave them to us, who have no courage

at all? I'm not brave: I shrink from violence: danger makes me miserable.

NAPOLEON (*interested*). Then why have you thrust yourself into danger?

LADY. Because there is no other way: I can trust nobody else. And now it is all useless—all because of you, who have no fear, because you have no heart, no feeling, no—(*She breaks off, and throws herself on her knees.*) Ah, General, let me go: let me go without asking any questions. You shall have your despatches and letters: I swear it.

NAPOLEON (*holding out his hand*). Yes: I am waiting for them. (*She gasps, daunted by his ruthless promptitude into despair of moving him by cajolery; but as she looks up perplexedly at him, it is plain that she is racking her brains for some device to outwit him. He meets her regard inflexibly.*)

LADY (*rising at last with a quiet little sigh*). I will get them for you. They are in my room. (*She turns to the door.*)

NAPOLEON. I shall accompany you, madame.

LADY (*drawing herself up with a noble air of offended delicacy*). I cannot permit you, General, to enter my chamber.

NAPOLEON. Then you shall stay here, madame, whilst I have your chamber searched for my papers.

LADY (*spitefully, openly giving up her plan*). You may save yourself the trouble. They are not there.

NAPOLEON. No: I have already told you where they are. (*Pointing to her breast.*)

LADY (*with pretty piteousness*). General: I only want to keep one little private letter. Only one. Let me have it.

NAPOLEON (*cold and stern*). Is that a reasonable demand, madam?

LADY (*encouraged by his not refusing point blank*). No; but that is why you must grant it. Are your own demands reasonable? thousands of lives for the sake of your victories, your ambitions, your destiny! And what I ask is such a

little thing. And I am only a weak woman, and you a brave man. (*She looks at him with her eyes full of tender pleading and is about to kneel to him again.*)

NAPOLEON (*brusquely*). Get up, get up. (*He turns moodily away and takes a turn across the room, pausing for a moment to say, over his shoulder*) You're talking nonsense; and you know it. (*She gets up and sits down in almost listless despair on the couch. When he turns and sees her there, he feels that his victory is complete, and that he may now indulge in a little play with his victim. He comes back and sits beside her. She looks alarmed and moves a little away from him; but a ray of rallying hope beams from her eye. He begins like a man enjoying some secret joke.*) How do you know I am a brave man?

LADY (*amazed*). You! General Buonaparte. (*Italian pronunciation.*)

NAPOLEON. Yes, I, General Bonaparte (*emphasizing the French pronunciation*).

LADY. Oh, how can you ask such a question? you! who stood only two days ago at the bridge at Lodi, with the air full of death, fighting a duel with cannons across the river! (*Shuddering.*) Oh, you d o brave things.

NAPOLEON. So do you.

LADY. I! (*With a sudden odd thought.*) Oh! Are you a coward?

NAPOLEON (*laughing grimly and pinching her cheek*). That is the one question you must never ask a soldier. The sergeant asks after the recruit's height, his age, his wind, his limb, but never after his courage. (*He gets up and walks about with his hands behind him and his head bowed, chuckling to himself.*)

LADY (*as if she had found it no laughing matter*). Ah, you can laugh at fear. Then you don't know what fear is.

NAPOLEON (*coming behind the couch*). Tell me this. Suppose you could have got that letter by coming to me

over the bridge at Lodi the day before yesterday! Suppose there had been no other way, and that this was a sure way—if only you escaped the cannon! (*She shudders and covers her eyes for a moment with her hands.*) Would you have been afraid?

LADY. Oh, horribly afraid, agonizingly afraid. (*She presses her hands on her heart.*) It hurts only to imagine it.

NAPOLEON (*inflexibly*). Would you have come for the despatches?

LADY (*overcome by the imagined horror*). Don't ask me. I must have come.

NAPOLEON. Why?

LADY. Because I must. Because there would have been no other way.

NAPOLEON (*with conviction*). Because you would have wanted my letter enough to bear your fear. There is only one universal passion: fear. Of all the thousand qualities a man may have, the only one you will find as certainly in the youngest drummer boy in my army as in me, is fear. It is fear that makes men fight: it is indifference that makes them run away: fear is the mainspring of war. Fear!—I know fear well, better than you, better than any woman. I once saw a regiment of good Swiss soldiers massacred by a mob in Paris because I was afraid to interfere: I felt myself a coward to the tips of my toes as I looked on at it. Seven months ago I revenged my shame by pounding that mob to death with cannon balls. Well, what of that? Has fear ever held a man back from anything he really wanted—or a woman either? Never. Come with me; and I will shew you twenty thousand cowards who will risk death every day for the price of a glass of brandy. And do you think there are no women in the army, braver than the men, because their lives are worth less? Psha! I think nothing of your fear or your bravery. If you had had to come across to me at Lodi,

you would not have been afraid: once on the bridge, every other feeling would have gone down before the necessity—the necessity—for making your way to my side and getting what you wanted.

And now, suppose you had done all this—suppose you had come safely out with that letter in your hand, knowing that when the hour came, your fear had tightened, not your heart, but your grip of your own purpose—that it had ceased to be fear, and had become strength, penetration, vigilance, iron resolution—how would you answer then if you were asked whether you were a coward?

LADY (*rising*). Ah, you are a hero, a real hero.

NAPOLEON. Pooh! there's no such thing as a real hero. (*He strolls down the room, making light of her enthusiasm, but by no means displeased with himself for having evoked it.*)

LADY. Ah, yes, there is. There is a difference between what you call my bravery and yours. You wanted to win the battle of Lodi for yourself and not for anyone else, didn't you?

NAPOLEON. Of course. (*Suddenly recollecting himself.*) Stop: no. (*He pulls himself piously together, and says, like a man conducting a religious service*) I am only the servant of the French republic, following humbly in the footsteps of the heroes of classical antiquity. I win battles for humanity—for my country, not for myself.

LADY (*disappointed*). Oh, then you are only a womanish hero, after all. (*She sits down again, all her enthusiasm gone, her elbow on the end of the couch, and her cheek propped on her hand.*)

NAPOLEON (*greatly astonished*). Womanish!

LADY (*listlessly*). Yes, like me. (*With deep melancholy.*) Do you think that if I only wanted those despatches for myself, I dare venture into a battle for them? No: if that

were all, I should not have the courage to ask to see you at your hotel, even. My courage is mere slavishness: it is of no use to me for my own purposes. It is only through love, through pity, through the instinct to save and protect someone else, that I can do the things that terrify me.

NAPOLEON (*contemptuously*). Pshaw! (*He turns slightingly away from her.*)

LADY. Aha! now you see that I'm not really brave. (*Relapsing into petulant listlessness.*) But what right have you to despise me if you only win your battles for others? for your country! through patriotism! That is what I call womanish: it is so like a Frenchman!

NAPOLEON (*furiously*). I am no Frenchman.

LADY (*innocently*). I thought you said you won the battle of Lodi for your country, General Bu— shall I pronounce it in Italian or French?

NAPOLEON. You are presuming on my patience, madam. I was born a French subject, but not in France.

LADY (*folding her arms on the end of the couch, and leaning on them with a marked access of interest in him*). You were not born a subject at all, I think.

NAPOLEON (*greatly pleased, starting on a fresh march*). Eh? Eh? You think not.

LADY. I am sure of it.

NAPOLEON. Well, well, perhaps not. (*The self-complacency of his assent catches his own ear. He stops short, reddening. Then, composing himself into a solemn attitude, modelled on the heroes of classical antiquity, he takes a high moral tone.*) But we must not live for ourselves alone, little one. Never forget that we should always think of others, and work for others, and lead and govern them for their own good. Self-sacrifice is the foundation of all true nobility of character.

LADY (*again relaxing her attitude with a sigh*). Ah, it is easy to see that you have never tried it, General.

NAPOLEON (*indignantly, fogretting all about Brutus and Scipio*). What do you mean by that speech, madam?

LADY. Haven't you noticed that people always exaggerate the value of the things they haven't got? The poor think they only need riches to be quite happy and good. Everybody worships truth, purity, unselfishness, for the same reason—because they have no experience of them. Oh, if they only knew!

NAPOLEON (*with angry derision*). If they only knew! Pray, do you know?

LADY (*with her arms stretched down and her hands clasped on her knees, looking straight before her*). Yes. I had the misfortune to be born good. (*Glancing up at him for a moment.*) And it is a misfortune, I can tell you, General. I really am truthful and unselfish and all the rest of it; and it's nothing but cowardice; want of character; want of being really, strongly, positively oneself.

NAPOLEON. Ha? (*Turning to her quickly with a flash of strong interest.*)

LADY (*earnestly, with rising enthusiasm*). What is the secret of your power? Only that you believe in yourself. You can fight and conquer for yourself and for nobody else. You are not afraid of your own destiny. You teach us what we all might be if we had the will and courage; and that (*suddenly sinking on her knees before him*) is why we all begin to worship you. (*She kisses his hands.*)

NAPOLEON (*embarrassed*). Tut, tut! Pray rise, madam.

LADY. Do not refuse my homage: it is your right. You will be emperor of France—

NAPOLEON (*hurriedly*). Take care. Treason!

LADY (*insisting*). Yes, emperor of France; then of Europe; perhaps of the world. I am only the first subject to swear allegiance. (*Again kissing his hand.*) My Emperor!

NAPOLEON (*overcome, raising her*). Pray, pray. No, no,

little one: this is folly. Come: be calm, be calm. (*Petting her.*) There, there, my girl.

LADY (*struggling with happy tears*). Yes, I know it is an impertinence in me to tell you what you must know far better than I do. But you are not angry with me, are you?

NAPOLEON. Angry! No, no: not a bit, not a bit. Come: you are a very clever and sensible and interesting little woman. (*He pats her on the cheek.*) Shall we be friends?

LADY (*enraptured*). Your friend! You will let me be your friend! Oh! (*She offers him both her hands with a radiant smile.*) You see: I shew my confidence in you.

NAPOLEON (*with a yell of rage, his eyes flashing*). What!

LADY. What's the matter?

NAPOLEON. Shew your confidence in me! So that I may shew my confidence in you in return by letting you give me the slip with the despatches, eh? Ah, Dalila, Dalila, you have been trying your tricks on me; and I have been as great a gull as my jackass of a lieutenant. (*He advances threateningly on her.*) Come: the despatches. Quick: I am not to be trifled with now.

LADY (*flying round the couch*). General—

NAPOLEON. Quick, I tell you. (*He passes swiftly up the middle of the room and intercepts her as she makes for the vineyard.*)

LADY (*at bay, confronting him*). You dare address me in that tone.

NAPOLEON. Dare!

LADY. Yes, dare. Who are you that you should presume to speak to me in that coarse way? Oh, the vile, vulgar Corsican adventurer comes out in you very easily.

NAPOLEON (*beside himself*). You she devil! (*Savagely.*) Once more, and only once, will you give me those papers or shall I tear them from you—by force?

LADY (*letting her hands fall*). Tear them from me—by force! (*As he glares at her like a tiger about to spring, she crosses her arms on her breast in the attitude of a martyr. The gesture and pose instantly awaken his theatrical instinct: he forgets his rage in the desire to shew her that in acting, too, she has met her match. He keeps her a moment in suspense; then suddenly clears up his countenance; puts his hands behind him with provoking coolness; looks at her up and down a couple of times; takes a pinch of snuff; wipes his fingers carefully and puts up his handkerchief, her heroic pose becoming more and more ridiculous all the time.*)

NAPOLEON (*at last*). Well?

LADY (*disconcerted, but with her arms still crossed devotedly*). Well: what are you going to do?

NAPOLEON. Spoil your attitude.

LADY. You brute! (*Abandoning the attitude, she comes to the end of the couch, where she turns with her back to it, leaning against it and facing him with her hands behind her.*)

NAPOLEON. Ah, that's better. Now listen to me. I like you. What's more, I value your respect.

LADY. You value what you have not got, then.

NAPOLEON. I shall have it presently. Now attend to me. Suppose I were to allow myself to be abashed by the respect due to your sex, your beauty, your heroism and all the rest of it? Suppose I, with nothing but such sentimental stuff to stand between these muscles of mine and those papers which you have about you, and which I want and mean to have: suppose I, with the prize within my grasp, were to falter and sneak away with my hands empty; or, what would be worse, cover up my weakness by playing the magnanimous hero, and sparing you the violence I dared not use, would you not despise me from the depths of your woman's soul? Would any woman be such a fool? Well, Bonaparte can rise to the situation and act like a woman when it is necessary. Do you understand?

The lady, without speaking, stands upright, and takes a packet of papers from her bosom. For a moment she has an intense impulse to dash them in his face. But her good breeding cuts her off from any vulgar method of relief. She hands them to him politely, only averting her head. The moment he takes them, she hurries across to the other side of the room; covers her face with her hands; and sits down, with her body turned away to the back of the chair.

NAPOLEON (*gloating over the papers*). Aha! That's right. That's right. (*Before opening them he looks at her and says*) Excuse me. (*He sees that she is hiding her face.*) Very angry with me, eh? (*He unties the packet, the seal of which is already broken, and puts it on the table to examine its contents.*)

LADY (*quietly, taking down her hands and shewing that she is not crying, but only thinking*). No. You were right. But I am sorry for you.

NAPOLEON (*pausing in the act of taking the uppermost paper from the packet*). Sorry for me! Why?

LADY. I am going to see you lose your honor.

NAPOLEON. Hm! Nothing worse than that? (*He takes up the paper.*)

LADY. And your happiness.

NAPOLEON. Happiness, little woman, is the most tedious thing in the world to me. Should I be what I am if I cared for happiness? Anything else?

LADY. Nothing— (*He interrupts her with an exclamation of satisfaction. She proceeds quietly*) except that you will cut a very foolish figure in the eyes of France.

NAPOLEON (*quickly*). What? (*The hand holding the paper involuntarily drops. The lady looks at him enigmatically in tranquil silence. He throws the letter down and breaks out into a torrent of scolding.*) What do you mean? Eh? Are you at your tricks again? Do you think I don't know what these papers contain? I'll tell you. First, my

information as to Beaulieu's retreat. There are only two things he can do—leatherbrained idiot that he is!—shut himself up in Mantua or violate the neutrality of Venice by taking Peschiera. You are one of old Leatherbrain's spies: he has discovered that he has been betrayed, and has sent you to intercept the information at all hazards—as if that could save him from m e, the old fool! The other papers are only my usual correspondence from Paris, of which you know nothing.

LADY (*prompt and businesslike*). General: let us make a fair division. Take the information your spies have sent you about the Austrian army; and give me the Paris correspondence. That will content me.

NAPOLEON (*his breath taken away by the coolness of the proposal*). A fair di— (*He gasps.*) It seems to me, madame, that you have come to regard my letters as your own property, of which I am trying to rob you.

LADY (*earnestly*). No: on my honor I ask for no letter of yours—not a word that has been written by you or to you. That packet contains a stolen letter: a letter written by a woman to a man—a man not her husband—a letter that means disgrace, infamy—

NAPOLEON. A love letter?

LADY (*bitter-sweetly*). What else but a love letter could stir up so much hate?

NAPOLEON. Why is it sent to me? To put the husband in my power, eh?

LADY. No, no: it can be of no use to you: I swear that it will cost you nothing to give it to me. It has been sent to you out of sheer malice—solely to injure the woman who wrote it.

NAPOLEON. Then why not send it to her husband instead of to me?

LADY (*completely taken aback*). Oh! (*Sinking back into the chair.*) I—I don't know. (*She breaks down.*)

NAPOLEON. Aha! I thought so: a little romance to get the papers back. (*He throws the packet on the table and confronts her with cynical goodhumor.*) Per Bacco, little woman, I can't help admiring you. If I could lie like that, it would save me a great deal of trouble.

LADY (*wringing her hands*). Oh, how I wish I really had told you some lie! You would have believed me then. The truth is the one thing that nobody will believe.

NAPOLEON (*with coarse familiarity, treating her as if she were a vivandière*). Capital! Capital! (*He puts his hands behind him on the table, and lifts himself on to it, sitting with his arms akimbo and his legs wide apart.*) Come: I am a true Corsican in my love for stories. But I could tell them better than you if I set my mind to it. Next time you are asked why a letter compromising a wife should not be sent to her husband, answer simply that the husband would not read it. Do you suppose, little innocent, that a man wants to be compelled by public opinion to make a scene, to fight a duel, to break up his household, to injure his career by a scandal, when he can avoid it all by taking care not to know?

LADY (*revolted*). Suppose that packet contained a letter about your own wife?

NAPOLEON (*offended, coming off the table*). You are impertinent, madame.

LADY (*humbly*). I beg your pardon. Cæsar's wife is above suspicion.

NAPOLEON (*with a deliberate assumption of superiority*). You have committed an indiscretion. I pardon you. In future, do not permit yourself to introduce real persons in your romances.

LADY (*politely ignoring a speech which is to her only a breach of good manners, and rising to move towards the table*). General: there really is a woman's letter there. (*Pointing to the packet.*) Give it to me.

NAPOLEON (*with brute conciseness, moving so as to prevent her getting too near the letters*). Why?

LADY. She is an old friend: we were at school together. She has written to me imploring me to prevent the letter falling into your hands.

NAPOLEON. Why has it been sent to me?

LADY. Because it compromises the director Barras.

NAPOLEON (*frowning, evidently startled*). Barras! (*Haughtily.*) Take care, madame. The director Barras is my attached personal friend.

LADY (*nodding placidly*). Yes. You became friends through your wife.

NAPOLEON. Again! Have I not forbidden you to speak of my wife? (*She keeps looking curiously at him, taking no account of the rebuke. More and more irritated, he drops his haughty manner, of which he is himself somewhat impatient, and says suspiciously, lowering his voice*) Who is this woman with whom you sympathize so deeply?

LADY. Oh, General! How could I tell you that?

NAPOLEON (*ill-humoredly, beginning to walk about again in angry perplexity*). Ay, ay: stand by one another. You are all the same, you women.

LADY (*indignantly*). We are not all the same, any more than you are. Do you think that if *I* loved another man, I should pretend to go on loving my husband, or be afraid to tell him or all the world? But this woman is not made that way. She governs men by cheating them; and (*with disdain*) they like it, and let her govern them. (*She sits down again, with her back to him.*)

NAPOLEON (*not attending to her*). Barras, Barras! (*Turning very threateningly to her, his face darkening.*) Take care, take care: do you hear? You may go too far.

LADY (*innocently turning her face to him*). What's the matter?

NAPOLEON. What are you hinting at? Who is this woman?

LADY (*meeting his angry searching gaze with tranquil indifference as she sits looking up at him with her right arm resting lightly along the back of her chair, and one knee crossed over the other*). A vain, silly, extravagant creature, with a very able and ambitious husband who knows her through and through—knows that she has lied to him about her age, her income, her social position, about everything that silly women lie about—knows that she is incapable of fidelity to any principle or any person; and yet could not help loving her—could not help his man's instinct to make use of her for his own advancement with Barras.

NAPOLEON (*in a stealthy, coldly furious whisper*). This is your revenge, you she cat, for having had to give me the letters.

LADY. Nonsense! Or do you mean that y o u are that sort of man?

NAPOLEON (*exasperated, clasps his hands behind him, his fingers twitching, and says, as he walks irritably away from her to the fireplace*). This woman will drive me out of my senses. (*To her.*) Begone.

LADY (*seated immovably*). Not without that letter.

NAPOLEON. Begone, I tell you. (*Walking from the fireplace to the vineyard and back to the table.*) You shall have no letter. I don't like you. You're a detestable woman, and as ugly as Satan. I don't choose to be pestered by strange women. Be off. (*He turns his back on her. In quiet amusement, she leans her cheek on her hand and laughs at him. He turns again, angrily mocking her.*) Ha! ha! ha! What are you laughing at?

LADY. At you, General. I have often seen persons of your sex getting into a pet and behaving like children; but I never saw a really great man do it before.

NAPOLEON (*brutally, flinging the words in her face*). Pooh: flattery! flattery! coarse, impudent flattery!

LADY (*springing up with a bright flush in her cheeks*). Oh,

you are too bad. Keep your letters. Read the story of your own dishonor in them; and much good may they do you. Good-bye. (*She goes indignantly towards the inner door.*)

NAPOLEON. My own—! Stop. Come back. Come back, I order you. (*She proudly disregards his savagely peremptory tone and continues on her way to the door. He rushes at her; seizes her by the wrist; and drags her back.*) Now, what do you mean? Explain. Explain, I tell you, or—(*Threatening her. She looks at him with unflinching defiance.*) Rrrr! you obstinate devil, you. Why can't you answer a civil question?

LADY (*deeply offended by his violence*). Why do you ask me? You have the explanation.

NAPOLEON. Where?

LADY (*pointing to the letters on the table*). There. You have only to read it. (*He snatches the packet up; hesitates; looks at her suspiciously; and throws it down again.*)

NAPOLEON. You seem to have forgotten your solicitude for the honor of your old friend.

LADY. She runs no risk now: she does not quite understand her husband.

NAPOLEON. I am to read the letter, then? (*He stretches out his hand as if to take up the packet again, with his eye on her.*)

LADY. I do not see how you can very well avoid doing so now. (*He instantly withdraws his hand.*) Oh, don't be afraid. You will find many interesting things in it.

NAPOLEON. For instance?

LADY. For instance, a duel—with Barras, a domestic scene, a broken household, a public scandal, a checked career, all sorts of things.

NAPOLEON. Hm! (*He looks at her; takes up the packet and looks at it, pursing his lips and balancing it in his hand; looks at her again; passes the packet into his left hand and puts it behind his back, raising his right to scratch the back*

of his head as he turns and goes up to the edge of the vineyard, where he stands for a moment looking out into the vines, deep in thought. The Lady watches him in silence, somewhat slightingly. Suddenly he turns and comes back again, full of force and decision.) I grant your request, madame. Your courage and resolution deserve to succeed. Take the letters for which you have fought so well; and remember henceforth that you found the vile, vulgar Corsican adventurer as generous to the vanquished after the battle as he was resolute in the face of the enemy before it. (*He offers her the packet.*)

LADY (*without taking it, looking hard at him*). What are you at now, I wonder? (*He dashes the packet furiously to the floor.*) Aha! I've spoiled that attitude, I think. (*She makes him a pretty mocking curtsey.*)

NAPOLEON (*snatching it up again*). Will you take the letters and begone (*advancing and thrusting them upon her*)?

LADY (*escaping round the table*). No: I don't want your letters.

NAPOLEON. Ten minutes ago, nothing else would satisfy you.

LADY (*keeping the table carefully between them*). Ten minutes ago you had not insulted me past all bearing.

NAPOLEON. I— (*swallowing his spleen*) I apologize.

LADY (*coolly*). Thanks. (*With forced politeness he offers her the packet across the table. She retreats a step out of its reach and says*) But don't you want to know whether the Austrians are at Mantua or Peschiera?

NAPOLEON. I have already told you that I can conquer my enemies without the aid of spies, madame.

LADY. And the letter! don't you want to read that?

NAPOLEON. You have said that it is not addressed to me. I am not in the habit of reading other people's letters. (*He again offers the packet.*)

LADY. In that case there can be no objection to your keeping it. All I wanted was to prevent your reading it.

(*Cheerfully.*) Good afternoon, General. (*She turns coolly towards the inner door.*)

NAPOLEON (*furiously flinging the packet on the couch*). Heaven grant me patience! (*He goes up determinedly and places himself before the door.*) Have you any sense of personal danger? Or are you one of those women who like to be beaten black and blue?

LADY. Thank you, General: I have no doubt the sensation is very voluptuous; but I had rather not. I simply want to go home: that's all. I was wicked enough to steal your despatches; but you have got them back; and you have forgiven me, because (*delicately reproducing his rhetorical cadence*) you are as generous to the vanquished after the battle as you are resolute in the face of the enemy before it. Won't you say good-bye to me? (*She offers her hand sweetly.*)

NAPOLEON (*repulsing the advance with a gesture of concentrated rage, and opening the door to call fiercely*). Giuseppe! (*Louder.*) Giuseppe! (*He bangs the door to, and comes to the middle of the room. The lady goes a little way into the vineyard to avoid him.*)

GIUSEPPE (*appearing at the door*). Excellency?

NAPOLEON. Where is that fool?

GIUSEPPE. He has had a good dinner, according to your instructions, excellency, and is now doing me the honor to gamble with me to pass the time.

NAPOLEON. Send him here. Bring him here. Come with him. (*Giuseppe, with unruffled readiness, hurries off. Napoleon turns curtly to the lady, saying*) I must trouble you to remain some moments longer, madame. (*He comes to the couch. She comes from the vineyard down the opposite side of the room to the sideboard, and posts herself there, leaning against it, watching him. He takes the packet from the couch and deliberately buttons it carefully into his breast pocket, looking at her meanwhile with an expression which*

suggests that she will soon find out the meaning of his proceedings, and will not like it. Nothing more is said until the lieutenant arrives followed by Giuseppe, who stands modestly in attendance at the table. The lieutenant, without cap, sword or gloves, and much improved in temper and spirits by his meal, chooses the Lady's side of the room, and waits, much at his ease, for Napoleon to begin.)

NAPOLEON. Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT (*encouragingly*). General.

NAPOLEON. I cannot persuade this lady to give me much information; but there can be no doubt that the man who tricked you out of your charge was, as she admitted to you, her brother.

LIEUTENANT (*triumphantly*). What did I tell you, General! What did I tell you!

NAPOLEON. You must find that man. Your honor is at stake; and the fate of the campaign, the destiny of France, of Europe, of humanity, perhaps, may depend on the information those despatches contain.

LIEUTENANT. Yes, I suppose they really are rather serious (*as if this had hardly occurred to him before*).

NAPOLEON (*energetically*). They are so serious, sir, that if you do not recover them, you will be degraded in the presence of your regiment.

LIEUTENANT. Whew! The regiment won't like that, I can tell you.

NAPOLEON. Personally, I am sorry for you. I would willingly conceal the affair if it were possible. But I shall be called to account for not acting on the despatches. I shall have to prove to all the world that I never received them, no matter what the consequences may be to you. I am sorry; but you see that I cannot help myself.

LIEUTENANT (*goodnaturedly*). Oh, don't take it to heart, General: it's really very good of you. Never mind what happens to me: I shall scrape through somehow; and we'll

beat the Austrians for you, despatches or no despatches. I hope you won't insist on my starting off on a wild goose chase after the fellow now. I haven't a notion where to look for him.

GIUSEPPE (*deferentially*). You forget, Lieutenant: he has your horse.

LIEUTENANT (*starting*). I forgot that. (*Resolutely.*) I'll go after him, General: I'll find that horse if it's alive anywhere in Italy. And I shan't forget the despatches: never fear. Giuseppe: go and saddle one of those mangy old post-horses of yours, while I get my cap and sword and things. Quick march. Off with you (*bustling him*).

GIUSEPPE. Instantly, Lieutenant, instantly. (*He disappears in the vineyard, where the light is now reddening with the sunset.*)

LIEUTENANT (*looking about him on his way to the inner door*). By the way, General, did I give you my sword or did I not? Oh, I remember now. (*Fretfully.*) It's all that nonsense about putting a man under arrest: one never knows where to find— (*Talks himself out of the room.*)

LADY (*still at the sideboard*). What does all this mean, General?

NAPOLEON. He will not find your brother.

LADY. Of course not. There's no such person.

NAPOLEON. The despatches will be irrecoverably lost.

LADY. Nonsense! They are inside your coat.

NAPOLEON. You will find it hard, I think, to prove that wild statement. (*The Lady starts. He adds, with clinching emphasis*) Those papers are lost.

LADY (*anxiously, advancing to the corner of the table*). And that unfortunate young man's career will be sacrificed.

NAPOLEON. His career! The fellow is not worth the gunpowder it would cost to have him shot. (*He turns contemptuously and goes to the hearth, where he stands with his back to her.*)

LADY (*wistfully*). You are very hard. Men and women are nothing to you but things to be used, even if they are broken in the use.

NAPOLEON (*turning on her*). Which of us has broken this fellow—I or you? Who tricked him out of the despatches? Did you think of his career then?

LADY (*naïvely concerned about him*). Oh, I never thought of that. It was brutal of me; but I couldn't help it, could I? How else could I have got the papers? (*Supplicating.*) General: you will save him from disgrace.

NAPOLEON (*laughing sourly*). Save him yourself, since you are so clever: it was you who ruined him. (*With savage intensity.*) I h a t e a bad soldier.

He goes out determinedly through the vineyard. She follows him a few steps with an appealing gesture, but is interrupted by the return of the lieutenant, gloved and capped, with his sword on, ready for the road. He is crossing to the outer door when she intercepts him.

LADY. Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT (*importantly*). You mustn't delay me, you know. Duty, madame, duty.

LADY (*imploringly*). Oh, sir, what are you going to do to my poor brother?

LIEUTENANT. Are you very fond of him?

LADY. I should die if anything happened to him. You must spare him. (*The lieutenant shakes his head gloomily.*) Yes, yes: you must: you shall: he is not fit to die. Listen to me. If I tell you where to find him—if I undertake to place him in your hands a prisoner, to be delivered up by you to General Bonaparte—will you promise me on your honor as an officer and a gentleman not to fight with him or treat him unkindly in any way?

LIEUTENANT. But suppose he attacks me. He has my pistols.

LADY. He is too great a coward.

LIEUTENANT. I don't feel so sure about that. He's capable of anything.

LADY. If he attacks you, or resists you in any way, I release you from your promise.

LIEUTENANT. My promise! I didn't mean to promise. Look here: you're as bad as he is: you've taken an advantage of me through the better side of my nature. What about my horse?

LADY. It is part of the bargain that you are to have your horse and pistols back.

LIEUTENANT. Honor bright?

LADY. Honor bright. (*She offers her hand.*)

LIEUTENANT (*taking it and holding it*). All right: I'll be as gentle as a lamb with him. His sister's a very pretty woman. (*He attempts to kiss her.*)

LADY (*slipping away from him*). Oh, Lieutenant! You forget: your career is at stake—the destiny of Europe—of humanity.

LIEUTENANT. Oh, bother the destiny of humanity. (*Making for her.*) Only a kiss.

LADY (*retreating round the table*). Not until you have regained your honor as an officer. Remember: you have not captured my brother yet.

LIEUTENANT (*seductively*). You'll tell me where he is, won't you?

LADY. I have only to send him a certain signal; and he will be here in quarter of an hour.

LIEUTENANT. He's not far off, then.

LADY. No: quite close. Wait here for him: when he gets my message he will come here at once and surrender himself to you. You understand?

LIEUTENANT (*intellectually overtaxed*). Well, it's a little complicated; but I daresay it will be all right.

LADY. And now, whilst you're waiting, don't you think you had better make terms with the General?

LIEUTENANT. Oh, look here, this is getting frightfully complicated. What terms?

LADY. Make him promise that if you catch my brother he will consider that you have cleared your character as a soldier. He will promise anything you ask on that condition.

LIEUTENANT. That's not a bad idea. Thank you: I think I'll try it.

LADY. Do. And mind, above all things, don't let him see how clever you are.

LIEUTENANT. I understand. He'd be jealous.

LADY. Don't tell him anything except that you are resolved to capture my brother or perish in the attempt. He won't believe you. Then you will produce my brother—

LIEUTENANT (*interrupting as he masters the plot*). And have the laugh at him! I say: what a clever little woman you are! (*Shouting.*) Giuseppe!

LADY. Sh! Not a word to Giuseppe about me. (*She puts her finger on her lips. He does the same. They look at one another warningly. Then, with a ravishing smile, she changes the gesture into wafting him a kiss, and runs out through the inner door. Electrified, he bursts into a volley of chuckles. Giuseppe comes back by the outer door.*)

GIUSEPPE. The horse is ready, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT. I'm not going just yet. Go and find the General, and tell him I want to speak to him.

GIUSEPPE (*shaking his head*). That will never do, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT. Why not?

GIUSEPPE. In this wicked world a general may send for a lieutenant; but a lieutenant must not send for a general.

LIEUTENANT. Oh, you think he wouldn't like it. Well, perhaps you're right: one has to be awfully particular about that sort of thing now we've got a republic.

Napoleon reappears, advancing from the vineyard, buttoning the breast of his coat, pale and full of gnawing thoughts.

GIUSEPPE (*unconscious of Napoleon's approach*). Quite true, Lieutenant, quite true. You are all like innkeepers now in France: you have to be polite to everybody.

NAPOLEON (*putting his hand on Giuseppe's shoulder*). And that destroys the whole value of politeness, eh?

LIEUTENANT. The very man I wanted! See here, General: suppose I catch that fellow for you!

NAPOLEON (*with ironical gravity*). You will not catch him, my friend.

LIEUTENANT. Aha! you think so; but you'll see. Just wait. Only, if I do catch him and hand him over to you, will you cry quits? Will you drop all this about degrading me in the presence of my regiment? Not that *I* mind, you know; but still no regiment likes to have all the other regiments laughing at it.

NAPOLEON. (*a cold ray of humor striking pallidly across his gloom*). What shall we do with this officer, Giuseppe? Everything he says is wrong.

GIUSEPPE (*promptly*). Make him a general, excellency; and then everything he says will be right.

LIEUTENANT (*crowing*). Haw-aw! (*He throws himself ecstatically on the couch to enjoy the joke.*)

NAPOLEON (*laughing and pinching Giuseppe's ear*). You are thrown away in this inn, Giuseppe. (*He sits down and places Giuseppe before him like a schoolmaster with a pupil.*) Shall I take you away with me and make a man of you?

GIUSEPPE (*shaking his head rapidly and repeatedly*). No, thank you, General. All my life long people have wanted to make a man of me. When I was a boy, our good priest wanted to make a man of me by teaching me to read and write. Then the organist at Melegnano wanted to make a man of me by teaching me to read music. The recruiting sergeant would have made a man of me if I had been a few inches taller. But it always meant making me work; and I am too lazy for that, thank Heaven! So I taught myself to

cook and became an innkeeper; and now I keep servants to do the work, and have nothing to do myself except talk, which suits me perfectly.

NAPOLEON (*looking at him thoughtfully*). You are satisfied?

GIUSEPPE (*with cheerful conviction*). Quite, excellency.

NAPOLEON. And you have no devouring devil inside you who must be fed with action and victory—gorged with them night and day—who makes you pay, with the sweat of your brain and body, weeks of Herculean toil for ten minutes of enjoyment—who is at once your slave and your tyrant, your genius and your doom—who brings you a crown in one hand and the oar of a galley slave in the other—who shews you all the kingdoms of the earth and offers to make you their master on condition that you become their servant!—have you nothing of that in you?

GIUSEPPE. Nothing of it! Oh, I assure you, excellency, my devouring devil is far worse than that. He offers me no crowns and kingdoms: he expects to get everything for nothing—sausages, omelettes, grapes, cheese, polenta, wine—three times a day, excellency: nothing less will content him.

LIEUTENANT. Come, drop it, Giuseppe: you're making me feel hungry again.

(*Giuseppe, with an apologetic shrug, retires from the conversation, and busies himself at the table, dusting it, setting the map straight, and replacing Napoleon's chair, which the lady has pushed back.*)

NAPOLEON (*turning to the lieutenant with sardonic ceremony*). I hope *I* have not been making you feel ambitious.

LIEUTENANT. Not at all: I don't fly so high. Besides: I'm better as I am: men like me are wanted in the army just now. The fact is, the Revolution was all very well for civilians; but it won't work in the army. You know what soldiers are, General: they w i l l have men of family for their officers. A subaltern must be a gentleman, because he's so much in contact with the men. But a general, or even a

colonel, may be any sort of riff-raff if he understands the shop well enough. A lieutenant is a gentleman: all the rest is chance. Why, who do you suppose won the battle of Lodi? I'll tell you. My horse did.

NAPOLEON (*rising*). Your folly is carrying you too far, sir. Take care.

LIEUTENANT. Not a bit of it. You remember all that red-hot cannonade across the river: the Austrians blazing away at you to keep you from crossing, and you blazing away at them to keep them from setting the bridge on fire? Did you notice where I was then?

NAPOLEON (*with menacing politeness*). I am sorry. I am afraid I was rather occupied at the moment.

GIUSEPPE (*with eager admiration*). They say you jumped off your horse and worked the big guns with your own hands, General.

LIEUTENANT. That was a mistake: an officer should never let himself down to the level of his men. (*Napoleon looks at him dangerously, and begins to walk tigerishly to and fro.*) But you might have been firing away at the Austrians still, if we cavalry fellows hadn't found the ford and got across and turned old Beaulieu's flank for you. You know you daren't have given the order to charge the bridge if you hadn't seen us on the other side. Consequently, I say that whoever found that ford won the battle of Lodi. Well, who found it? I was the first man to cross: and I know. It was my horse that found it. (*With conviction, as he rises from the couch.*) That horse is the true conqueror of the Austrians.

NAPOLEON (*passionately*). You idiot: I'll have you shot for losing those despatches: I'll have you blown from the mouth of a cannon: nothing less could make any impression on you. (*Baying at him.*) Do you hear? Do you understand?

A French officer enters unobserved, carrying his sheathed sabre in his hand.

LIEUTENANT (*unabashed*). If I don't capture him, General. Remember the if.

NAPOLEON. If! If!! Ass: there is no such man.

THE OFFICER (*suddenly stepping between them and speaking in the unmistakable voice of the Strange Lady*). Lieutenant: I am your prisoner. (*She offers him her sabre. They are amazed. Napoleon gazes at her for a moment thunderstruck; then seizes her by the wrist and drags her roughly to him, looking closely and fiercely at her to satisfy himself as to her identity; for it now begins to darken rapidly into night, the red glow over the vineyard giving way to clear starlight.*)

NAPOLEON. Pah! (*He flings her hand away with an exclamation of disgust, and turns his back on her with his hand in his breast and his brow lowering.*)

LIEUTENANT (*triumphantly, taking the sabre*). No such man: eh, General? (*To the Lady.*) I say: where's my horse?

LADY. Safe at Borghetto, waiting for you, Lieutenant.

NAPOLEON (*turning on them*). Where are the despatches?

LADY. You would never guess. They are in the most unlikely place in the world. Did you meet my sister here, any of you?

LIEUTENANT. Yes. Very nice woman. She's wonderfully like you; but of course she's better looking.

LADY (*mysteriously*). Well, do you know that she is a witch?

GIUSEPPE (*running down to them in terror, crossing himself*). Oh, no, no, no. It is not safe to jest about such things. I cannot have it in my house, excellency.

LIEUTENANT. Yes, drop it. You're my prisoner, you know. Of course I don't believe in any such rubbish; but still it's not a proper subject for joking.

LADY. But this is very serious. My sister has bewitched the General. (*Giuseppe and the Lieutenant recoil from Napoleon.*) General: open your coat: you will find the des-

patches in the breast of it. (*She puts her hand quickly on his breast.*) Yes: there they are: I can feel them. Eh? (*She looks up into his face half coaxingly, half mockingly.*) Will you allow me, General? (*She takes a button as if to unbutton his coat, and pauses for permission.*)

NAPOLEON (*inscrutably*). If you dare.

LADY. Thank you. (*She opens his coat and takes out the despatches.*) There! (*To Giuseppe, shewing him the despatches.*) See!

GIUSEPPE (*flying to the outer door*). No, in heaven's name! They're bewitched.

LADY (*turning to the Lieutenant*). Here, Lieutenant: you're not afraid of them.

LIEUTENANT (*retreating*). Keep off. (*Seizing the hilt of the sabre.*) Keep off, I tell you.

LADY (*to Napoleon*). They belong to you, General. Take them.

GIUSEPPE. Don't touch them, excellency. Have nothing to do with them.

LIEUTENANT. Be careful, General: be careful.

GIUSEPPE. Burn them. And burn the witch, too.

LADY (*to Napoleon*). Shall I burn them?

NAPOLEON (*thoughtfully*). Yes, burn them. Giuseppe: go and fetch a light.

GIUSEPPE (*trembling and stammering*). Do you mean go alone—in the dark—with a witch in the house?

NAPOLEON. Psha! You're a poltroon. (*To the Lieutenant.*) Oblige me by going, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT (*remonstrating*). Oh, I say, General! No, look here, you know: nobody can say I'm a coward after Lodi. But to ask me to go into the dark by myself without a candle after such an awful conversation is a little too much. How would you like to do it yourself?

NAPOLEON (*irritably*). You refuse to obey my order?

LIEUTENANT (*resolutely*). Yes, I do. It's not reasonable.

But I'll tell you what I'll do. If Giuseppe goes, I'll go with him and protect him.

NAPOLEON (*to Giuseppe*). There! will that satisfy you? Be off, both of you.

GIUSEPPE (*humbly, his lips trembling*). W-willingly, your excellency. (*He goes reluctantly towards the inner door.*) Heaven protect me! (*To the lieutenant.*) After you, Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT. You'd better go first: I don't know the way.

GIUSEPPE. You can't miss it. Besides (*imploringly, laying his hand on his sleeve*), I am only a poor innkeeper; and you are a man of family.

LIEUTENANT. There's something in that. Here: you needn't be in such a fright. Take my arm. (*Giuseppe does so.*) That's the way. (*They go out, arm in arm. It is now starry night. The lady throws the packet on the table and seats herself at her ease on the couch enjoying the sensation of freedom from petticoats.*)

LADY. Well, General: I've beaten you.

NAPOLEON (*walking about*). You have been guilty of indelicacy—of unwomanliness. Do you consider that costume a proper one to wear?

LADY. It seems to me much the same as yours.

NAPOLEON. Psha! I blush for you.

LADY (*naively*). Yes: soldiers blush so easily! (*He growls and turns away. She looks mischievously at him, balancing the despatches in her hand.*) Wouldn't you like to read these before they're burnt, General? You must be dying with curiosity. Take a peep. (*She throws the packet on the table, and turns her face away from it.*) I won't look.

NAPOLEON. I have no curiosity whatever, madame. But since you are evidently burning to read them, I give you leave to do so.

LADY. Oh, I've read them already.

NAPOLEON (*starting*). What!

LADY. I read them the first thing after I rode away on that poor lieutenant's horse. So you see I know what's in them; and you don't.

NAPOLEON. Excuse me: I read them when I was out there in the vineyard ten minutes ago.

LADY. Oh! (*Jumping up.*) Oh, General: I've not beaten you. I do admire you so. (*He laughs and pats her cheek.*) This time really and truly without shamming, I do you homage (*kissing his hand*).

NAPOLEON (*quickly withdrawing it*). Brr! Don't do that. No more witchcraft.

LADY. I want to say something to you—only you would misunderstand it.

NAPOLEON. Need that stop you?

LADY. Well, it is this. I adore a man who is not afraid to be mean and selfish.

NAPOLEON (*indignantly*). I am neither mean nor selfish.

LADY. Oh, you don't appreciate yourself. Besides, I don't really mean meanness and selfishness.

NAPOLEON. Thank you. I thought perhaps you did.

LADY. Well, of course I do. But what I mean is a certain strong simplicity about you.

NAPOLEON. That's better.

LADY. You didn't want to read the letters; but you were curious about what was in them. So you went into the garden and read them when no one was looking, and then came back and pretended you hadn't. That's the meanest thing I ever knew any man do; but it exactly fulfilled your purpose; and so you weren't a bit afraid or ashamed to do it.

NAPOLEON (*abruptly*). Where did you pick up all these vulgar scruples—this (*with contemptuous emphasis*) conscience of yours? I took you for a lady—an aristocrat. Was your grandfather a shopkeeper, pray?

LADY. No: he was an Englishman.

NAPOLEON. That accounts for it. The English are a nation of shopkeepers. Now I understand why you've beaten me.

LADY. Oh, I haven't beaten you. And I'm not English.

NAPOLEON. Yes, you are—English to the backbone. Listen to me: I will explain the English to you.

LADY (*eagerly*). Do. (*With a lively air of anticipating an intellectual treat, she sits down on the couch and composes herself to listen to him. Secure of his audience, he at once nerves himself for a performance. He considers a little before he begins; so as to fix her attention by a moment of suspense. His style is at first modelled on Talma's in Corneille's "Cinna;" but it is somewhat lost in the darkness, and Talma presently gives way to Napoleon, the voice coming through the gloom with startling intensity.*)

NAPOLEON. There are three sorts of people in the world, the low people, the middle people, and the high people. The low people and the high people are alike in one thing: they have no scruples, no morality. The low are beneath morality, the high above it. I am not afraid of either of them: for the low are unscrupulous without knowledge, so that they make an idol of me; whilst the high are unscrupulous without purpose, so that they go down before my will. Look you: I shall go over all the mobs and all the courts of Europe as a plough goes over a field. It is the middle people who are dangerous: they have both knowledge and purpose. But they, too, have their weak point. They are full of scruples—chained hand and foot by their morality and respectability.

LADY. Then you will beat the English; for all shopkeepers are middle people.

NAPOLEON. No, because the English are a race apart. No Englishman is too low to have scruples: no English-

man is high enough to be free from their tyranny. But every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world. When he wants a thing, he never tells himself that he wants it. He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who have got the thing he wants. Then he becomes irresistible. Like the aristocrat, he does what pleases him and grabs what he wants: like the shopkeeper, he pursues his purpose with the industry and steadfastness that come from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility. He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude. As the great champion of freedom and national independence, he conquers and annexes half the world, and calls it Colonization. When he wants a new market for his adulterated Manchester goods, he sends a missionary to teach the natives the gospel of peace. The natives kill the missionary: he flies to arms in defence of Christianity; fights for it; conquers for it; and takes the market as a reward from heaven. In defence of his island shores, he puts a chaplain on board his ship; nails a flag with a cross on it to his top-gallant mast; and sails to the ends of the earth, sinking, burning and destroying all who dispute the empire of the seas with him. He boasts that a slave is free the moment his foot touches British soil; and he sells the children of his poor at six years of age to work under the lash in his factories for sixteen hours a day. He makes two revolutions, and then declares war on our one in the name of law and order. There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles; he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his king on loyal principles, and cuts off his

king's head on republican principles. His watchword is always duty; and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost. He—

LADY. W-w-w-w-w-wh! Do stop a moment. I want to know how you make me out to be English at this rate.

NAPOLEON (*dropping his rhetorical style*). It's plain enough. You wanted some letters that belonged to me. You have spent the morning in stealing them—yes, stealing them, by highway robbery. And you have spent the afternoon in putting me in the wrong about them—in assuming that it was *I* who wanted to steal y o u r letters—in explaining that it all came about through my meanness and selfishness, and your goodness, your devotion, your self-sacrifice. That's English.

LADY. Nonsense. I am sure I am not a bit English. The English are a very stupid people.

NAPOLEON. Yes, too stupid sometimes to know when they're beaten. But I grant that your brains are not English. You see, though your grandfather was an Englishman, your grandmother was—what? A Frenchwoman?

LADY. Oh, no. An Irishwoman.

NAPOLEON (*quickly*). Irish! (*Thoughtfully.*) Yes: I forgot the Irish. An English army led by an Irish general: that might be a match for a French army led by an Italian general. (*He pauses, and adds, half jestingly, half moodily*) At all events, y o u have beaten me; and what beats a man first will beat him last. (*He goes meditatively into the moonlit vineyard and looks up. She steals out after him. She ventures to rest her hand on his shoulder, overcome by the beauty of the night and emboldened by its obscurity.*)

LADY (*softly*). What are you looking at?

NAPOLEON (*pointing up*). My star.

LADY. You believe in that?

NAPOLEON. I do. (*They look at it for a moment, she leaning a little on his shoulder.*)

LADY. Do you know that the English say that a man's star is not complete without a woman's garter?

NAPOLEON (*scandalized—abruptly shaking her off and coming back into the room*). Pah! The hypocrites! If the French said that, how they would hold up their hands in pious horror! (*He goes to the inner door and holds it open, shouting*) Hallo! Giuseppe. Where's that light, man. (*He comes between the table and the sideboard, and moves the chair to the table, beside his own.*) We have still to burn the letter. (*He takes up the packet. Giuseppe comes back, pale and still trembling, carrying a branched candlestick with a couple of candles alight, in one hand, and a broad snuffers tray in the other.*)

GIUSEPPE (*piteously, as he places the light on the table*). Excellency: what were you looking up at just now—out there? (*He points across his shoulder to the vineyard, but is afraid to look round.*)

NAPOLEON (*unfolding the packet*). What is that to you?

GIUSEPPE (*stammering*). Because the witch is gone—vanished; and no one saw her go out.

LADY (*coming behind him from the vineyard*). We were watching her riding up to the moon on your broomstick, Giuseppe. You will never see her again.

GIUSEPPE. Gesu Maria! (*He crosses himself and hurries out.*)

NAPOLEON (*throwing down the letters in a heap on the table*). Now. (*He sits down at the table in the chair which he has just placed.*)

LADY. Yes; but you know you have the letter in your pocket. (*He smiles; takes a letter from his pocket; and tosses it on the top of the heap. She holds it up and looks at him, saying*) About Cæsar's wife.

NAPOLEON. Cæsar's wife is above suspicion. Burn it.

LADY (*taking up the snuffers and holding the letter to the candle flame with it*). I wonder would Cæsar's wife be above suspicion if she saw us here together!

NAPOLEON (*echoing her, with his elbows on the table and his cheeks on his hands, looking at the letter*). I wonder!

(*The Strange Lady puts the letter down alight on the snuffers tray, and sits down beside Napoleon, in the same attitude, elbows on table, cheeks on hands, watching it burn. When it is burnt, they simultaneously turn their eyes and look at one another. The curtain steals down and hides them.*)

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE

OR, CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

BEING THE NOVEL OF CASHEL BYRON'S PROFESSION DONE INTO A STAGE PLAY IN THREE ACTS, AND IN BLANK VERSE, WITH A NOTE ON MODERN PRIZE FIGHTING

By

BERNARD SHAW

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
1917

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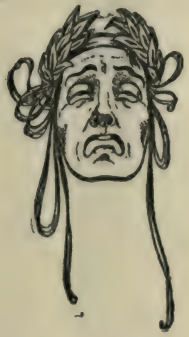

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PREFACE

The Admirable Bashville is a product of the British law of copyright. As that law stands at present, the first person who patches up a stage version of a novel, however worthless and absurd that version may be, and has it read by himself and a few confederates to another confederate who has paid for admission in a hall licensed for theatrical performances, secures the stage rights of that novel, even as against the author himself; and the author must buy him out before he can touch his own work for the purposes of the stage.

A famous case in point is the drama of East Lynne, adapted from the late Mrs. Henry Wood's novel of that name. It was enormously popular, and is still the surest refuge of touring companies in distress. Many authors feel that Mrs. Henry Wood was hardly used in not getting any of the money which was plentifully made in this way through her story. To my mind, since her literary copyright probably brought her a fair wage for the work of writing the book, her real grievance was, first, that her name and credit were attached to a play with which she had nothing to do, and which may quite possibly have been to her a detestable travesty and profanation of her story; and second, that the authors of that play had the legal power to prevent her from having any version of her own performed, if she had wished to make one.

There is only one way in which the author can protect himself; and that is by making a version of his own

and going through the same legal farce with it. But the legal farce involves the hire of a hall and the payment of a fee of two guineas to the King's Reader of Plays. When I wrote Cashel Byron's Profession I had no guineas to spare, a common disability of young authors. What is equally common, I did not know the law. A reasonable man may guess a reasonable law, but no man can guess a foolish anomaly. Fortunately, by the time my book so suddenly revived in America I was aware of the danger, and in a position to protect myself by writing and performing The Admirable Bashville. The prudence of doing so was soon demonstrated; for rumors soon reached me of several American stage versions; and one of these has actually been played in New York, with the boxing scenes under the management (so it is stated) of the eminent pugilist Mr. James J. Corbett. The New York press, in a somewhat derisive vein, conveyed the impression that in this version Cashel Byron sought to interest the public rather as the last of the noble race of the Byrons of Dorsetshire than as his unromantic self; but in justice to a play which I never read, and an actor whom I never saw, and who honorably offered to treat me as if I had legal rights in the matter, I must not accept the newspaper evidence as conclusive.

As I write these words, I am promised by the King in his speech to Parliament a new Copyright Bill. I believe it embodies, in our British fashion, the recommendations of the book publishers as to the concerns of the authors, and the notions of the musical publishers as to the concerns of the playwrights. As author and playwright I am duly obliged to the Commission for saving me the trouble of speaking for myself, and to the wit-

nesses for speaking for me. But unless Parliament takes the opportunity of giving the authors of all printed works of fiction, whether dramatic or narrative, both playwright and copyright (as in America), such to be independent of any insertions or omissions of formulas about "all rights reserved" or the like, I am afraid the new Copyright Bill will leave me with exactly the opinion both of the copyright law and the wisdom of Parliament I at present entertain. As a good Socialist I do not at all object to the limitation of my right of property in my own works to a comparatively brief period, followed by complete Communism: in fact, I cannot see why the same salutary limitation should not be applied to all property rights whatsoever; but a system which enables any alert sharper to acquire property rights in my stories as against myself and the rest of the community would, it seems to me, justify a rebellion if authors were numerous and warlike enough to make one.

It may be asked why I have written The Admirable Bashville in blank verse. My answer is that I had but a week to write it in. Blank verse is so childishly easy and expeditious (hence, by the way, Shakespear's copious output), that by adopting it I was enabled to do within the week what would have cost me a month in prose.

Besides, I am fond of blank verse. Not nineteenth century blank verse, of course, nor indeed, with a very few exceptions, any post-Shakespearean blank verse. Nay, not Shakespearean blank verse itself later than the histories. When an author can write the prose dialogue of the first scene in As You Like It, or Hamlet's colloquies with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, there is really no excuse for The Seven Ages and "To be or not to be,"

except the excuse of a haste that made great facility indispensable. I am quite sure that any one who is to recover the charm of blank verse must frankly go back to its beginnings and start a literary pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. I like the melodious sing-song, the clear simple one-line and two-line sayings, and the occasional rhymed tags, like the half closes in an eighteenth century symphony, in Peele, Kyd, Greene, and the histories of Shakespear. How any one with music in him can turn from Henry VI., John, and the two Richards to such a mess of verse half developed into rhetorical prose as Cymbeline, is to me explicable only by the uncivil hypothesis that the artistic qualities in the Elizabethan drama do not exist for most of its critics; so that they hang on to its purely prosaic content, and hypnotize themselves into absurd exaggerations of the value of that content. Even poets fall under the spell. Ben Jonson described Marlowe's line as "mighty"! As well put Michael Angelo's epitaph on the tombstone of Paolo Uccello. No wonder Jonson's blank verse is the most horribly disagreeable product in literature, and indicates his most prosaic mood as surely as his shorter rhymed measures indicate his poetic mood. Marlowe never wrote a mighty line in his life: Cowper's single phrase, "Toll for the brave," drowns all his mightinesses as Great Tom drowns a military band. But Marlowe took that very pleasant-sounding rigmarole of Peele and Greene, and added to its sunny daylight the insane splendors of night, and the cheap tragedy of crime. Because he had only a common sort of brain, he was hopelessly beaten by Shakespear; but he had a fine ear and a soaring spirit: in short, one does not forget "wanton Arethusa's azure arms"

and the like. But the pleasant-sounding rigmarole was the basis of the whole thing; and as long as that rigmarole was practised frankly for the sake of its pleasantness, it was readable and speakable. It lasted until Shakespear did to it what Raphael did to Italian painting; that is, overcharged and burst it by making it the vehicle of a new order of thought, involving a mass of intellectual ferment and psychological research. The rigmarole could not stand the strain; and Shakespear's style ended in a chaos of half-shattered old forms, half-emancipated new ones, with occasional bursts of prose eloquence on the one hand, occasional delicious echoes of the rigmarole, mostly from Calibans and masque personages, on the other, with, alas! a great deal of filling up with formulary blank verse which had no purpose except to save the author's time and thought.

When a great man destroys an art form in this way, its ruins make palaces for the clever would-be great. After Michael Angelo and Raphael, Giulio Romano and the Carracci. After Marlowe and Shakespear, Chapman and the Police News poet Webster. Webster's specialty was blood: Chapman's, balderdash. Many of us by this time find it difficult to believe that pre-Ruskinite art criticism used to prostrate itself before the works of Domenichino and Guido, and to patronize the modest little beginnings of those who came between Cimabue and Masaccio. But we have only to look at our own current criticism of Elizabethan drama to satisfy ourselves that in an art which has not yet found its Ruskin or its pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the same folly in still academically propagated. It is possible, and even usual, for men professing to have ears and a sense of poetry to

snub Peele and Greene and grovel before Fletcher and Webster—Fletcher! a facile blank verse penny-a-liner: Webster! a turgid paper cut-throat. The subject is one which I really cannot pursue without intemperance of language. The man who thinks The Duchess of Malfi better than David and Bethsabe is outside the pale, not merely of literature, but almost of humanity.

Yet some of the worst of these post-Shakespearean duffers, from Jonson to Heywood, suddenly became poets when they turned from the big drum of pseudo-Shakespearean drama to the pipe and tabor of the masque, exactly as Shakespear himself recovered the old charm of the rigmarole when he turned from Prospero to Ariel and Caliban. Cyril Tourneur and Heywood could certainly have produced very pretty rigmarole plays if they had begun where Shakespear began, instead of trying to begin where he left off. Jonson and Beaumont would very likely have done themselves credit on the same terms: Marston would have had at least a chance. Massinger was in his right place, such as it was; and one would not disturb the gentle Ford, who was never born to storm the footlights. Webster could have done no good anyhow or anywhere: the man was a fool. And Chapman would always have been a blathering unreadable pedant, like Landor, in spite of his classical amateurship and respectable strenuosity of character. But with these exceptions it may plausibly be held that if Marlowe and Shakespear could have been kept out of their way, the rest would have done well enough on the lines of Peele and Greene. However, they thought otherwise; and now that their freethinking paganism, so dazzling to the pupils of Paley and the converts of Wesley, offers itself

in vain to the disciples of Darwin and Nietzsche, there is an end of them. And a good riddance, too.

Accordingly, I have poetasted The Admirable Bashville in the rigmarole style. And lest the Webster worshippers should declare that there is not a single correct line in all my three acts, I have stolen or paraphrased a few from Marlowe and Shakespear (not to mention Henry Carey); so that if any man dares quote me derisively, he shall do so in peril of inadvertently lighting on a purple patch from Hamlet or Faustus.

I have also endeavored in this little play to prove that I am not the heartless creature some of my critics take me for. I have strictly observed the established laws of stage popularity and probability. I have simplified the character of the heroine, and summed up her sweetness in the one sacred word: Love. I have given consistency to the heroism of Cashel. I have paid to Morality, in the final scene, the tribute of poetic justice. I have restored to Patriotism its usual place on the stage, and gracefully acknowledged The Throne as the fountain of social honor. I have paid particular attention to the construction of the play, which will be found equal in this respect to the best contemporary models.

And I trust the result will be found satisfactory.

The Admirable Bashville; or, Constancy Unrewarded

ACT I

A glade in Wiltstoken Park

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA. Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,
And from the well of Nature in our hearts
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice
That bears the weight of all the stamping world.
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,
Albeit most rich, most learned, and most wise,
Am yet most lonely. What are riches worth
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse bearer
That life remains unpurchasable? Learning
Learns but one lesson: doubt! To excel all
Is, to be lonely. Oh, ye busy birds,
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees
With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,
Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,
Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads
High heavens above us crawlers.

[*A rook sets up a great cawing; and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying. She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves.*

Lo, the leaves
That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me—poor maid!—

Deride with joyous comfortable chatter
These stolen feathers. Laugh at me, the clothed one.
Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books.
Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad.
Give me a mate that never heard of these,
A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;
Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.

[*Another gust of wind and bird-chatter. She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands.* CASHEL BYRON, *in a white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees.*

CASHEL. What's this? Whom have we here? A woman!

LYDIA [*looking up*]. Yes.

CASHEL. You have no business here. I have. Away! Women distract me. Hence!

LYDIA. Bid you me hence?
I am upon mine own ground. Who are you?
I take you for a god, a sylvan god.
This place is mine: I share it with the birds,
The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company
Of haunted solitudes.

CASHEL. A sylvan god!
A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?
Walk? heave the chest with breath? or like a feather
Lift you—like this? [*He sets her on her feet.*

LYDIA [*panting*]. You take away my breath!
You're strong. Your hands off, please. Thank you. Farewell.

CASHEL. Before you go: when shall we meet again?

LYDIA. Why should we meet again?

CASHEL. Who knows? We *shall.*
That much I know by instinct. What's your name?
LYDIA. Lydia Carew.
CASHEL. Lydia's a pretty name.
Where do you live?
LYDIA. I' the castle.
CASHEL [*thunderstruck*]. Do not say
You are the lady of this great domain.
LYDIA. I am.
CASHEL. Accursed luck! I took you for
The daughter of some farmer. Well, your pardon.
I came too close: I looked too deep. Farewell.
LYDIA. I pardon that. Now tell me who you are.
CASHEL. Ask me not whence I come, nor what I am.
You are the lady of the castle. I
Have but this hard and blackened hand to live by.
LYDIA. I have felt its strength and envied you. Your name?
I have told you mine.
CASHEL. My name is Cashel Byron.
LYDIA. I never heard the name; and yet you utter it
As men announce a celebrated name.
Forgive my ignorance.
CASHEL. I bless it, Lydia.
I have forgot your other name.
LYDIA. Carew.
Cashel's a pretty name, too.
MELLISH [*calling through the wood*]. Coo-ee! Byron!
CASHEL. A thousand curses! Oh, I beg you, go.
This is a man you must not meet.
MELLISH [*further off*]. Coo-ee!
LYDIA. He's losing us. What does he in my woods?

CASHEL. He is a part of what I am. What that is
You must not know. It would end all between us.
And yet there's no dishonor in't: your lawyer,
Who let your lodge to me, will vouch me honest.
I am ashamed to tell you what I am—
At least, as yet. Some day, perhaps.

MELLISH [*nearer*]. Coo-ee!

LYDIA. His voice is nearer. Fare you well, my tenant.
When next your rent falls due, come to the castle.
Pay me in person. Sir: your most obedient.

[*She curtsies and goes.*

CASHEL. Lives in this castle! Owns this park! A lady
Marry a prizefighter! Impossible.
And yet the prizefighter must marry her.

Enter MELLISH

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish dam,
Is this thy park, that thou, with voice obscene,
Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my name
For all the world to know that Cashel Byron
Is training here for combat.

MELLISH. Swine you me?
I've caught you, have I? You have found a woman.
Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on her.
I will. I say it. And my name's Bob Mellish.

CASHEL. Change thy initial and be truly hight
Hellish. As for thy dog, why dost thou keep one
And bark thyself? Begone.

MELLISH. I'll not begone.
You shall come back with me and do your duty—
Your duty to your backers, do you hear?

You have not punched the bag this blessed day.

CASHEL. The putrid bag engirdled by thy belt
Invites my fist.

MELLISH [*weeping*]. Ingrate! O wretched lot!
Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish,
Trainer of heroes, builder-up of brawn,
Vicarious victor, thou createst champions
That quickly turn thy tyrants. But beware:
Without me thou art nothing. Disobey me,
And all thy boasted strength shall fall from thee.
With flaccid muscles and with failing breath
Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe,
I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day
Thou didst forswear thy training.

CASHEL. Noisome quack
That canst not from thine own abhorrent visage
Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st
Even with thy presence my untainted blood
Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself
Rotten with surfeiting. Leave me in peace.
This grove is sacred: thou profanest it.
Hence! I have business that concerns thee not.

MELLISH. Ay, with your woman. You will lose your fight.
Have you forgot your duty to your backers?
Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is!
What makes a man but duty? Where were we
Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words:
England expects that every man——

CASHEL. Shall twaddle
About his duty. Mellish: at no hour
Can I regard thee wholly without loathing;

But when thou play'st the moralist, by Heaven,
My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee;
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall
On Mars's armor—but enough of that.
It does remind me of my mother.

MELLISH. Ah,
Byron, let it remind thee. Once I heard
An old song: it ran thus. [*He clears his throat.*] Ahem,
Ahem!

[*Sings*]—They say there is no other
Can take the place of mother—

I am out o' voice: forgive me; but remember:
Thy mother—were that sainted woman here—
Would say, Obey thy trainer.

CASHEL. Now, by Heaven,
Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom.
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out?
They thunder like an avalanche. Old man:
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now?
Presume not on thine age and on thy nastiness.
Vanish, and promptly.

MELLISH. Can I leave thee here
Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews?
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge.

CASHEL. Within this breast a fire is newly lit
Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose radiance
Shall make the orb of night hang in the heavens
Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon.

MELLISH. Ah me, ah me, where wilt thou spend the night?

CASHEL. Wiltstoken's windows wandering beneath,
Wiltstoken's holy bell hearkening,
Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly.

MELLISH. The lady of the castle! Thou art mad.

CASHEL. 'Tis thou art mad to trifle in my path.
Thwart me no more. Begone.

MELLISH. My boy, my son,
I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness.
Thwart thee, my son! Ah, no. I'll go with thee.
I'll brave the dews. I'll sacrifice my sleep.
I am old—no matter: ne'er shall it be said
Mellish deserted thee.

CASHEL. You resolute gods
That will not spare this man, upon your knees
Take the disparity twixt his age and mine.
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat
I step at your behest. Bear you me witness
This is not Victory, but Execution.

[*He solemnly projects his fist with colossal force against the waistcoat of* MELLISH *who doubles up like a folded towel, and lies without sense or motion.*

And now the night is beautiful again.

[*The castle clock strikes the hour in the distance.*

Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark!
It strikes in poetry. 'Tis ten o'clock.
Lydia: to thee!

[*He steals off towards the castle.* MELLISH *stirs and groans.*

ACT II

Scene I

London. A room in Lydia's house

Enter Lydia *and* Lucian

LYDIA. Welcome, dear cousin, to my London house.
Of late you have been chary of your visits.
LUCIAN. I have been greatly occupied of late.
The minister to whom I act as scribe
In Downing Street was born in Birmingham,
And, like a thoroughbred commercial statesman,
Splits his infinities, which I, poor slave,
Must reunite, though all the time my heart
Yearns for my gentle coz's company.
LYDIA. Lucian: there is some other reason. Think!
Since England was a nation every mood
Her scribes have prepositionally split;
But thine avoidance dates from yestermonth.
LUCIAN. There is a man I like not haunts this house.
LYDIA. Thou speak'st of Cashel Byron?
LUCIAN. Aye, of him.
Hast thou forgotten that eventful night
When as we gathered were at Hoskyn House
To hear a lecture by Herr Abendgasse,
He placed a single finger on my chest,
And I, ensorceled, would have sunk supine
Had not a chair received my falling form.
LYDIA. Pooh! That was but by way of illustration.
LUCIAN. What right had he to illustrate his point
Upon my person? Was I his assistant

That he should try experiments on me
As Simpson did on his with chloroform?
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo
He hath unmanned me: all my nerve is gone.
This very morning my official chief,
Tapping with friendly forefinger this button,
Levelled me like a thunderstricken elm
Flat upon the Colonial Office floor.

LYDIA. Fancies, coz.

LUCIAN. Fancies! Fits! the chief said fits!
Delirium tremens! the chlorotic dance
Of Vitus! What could any one have thought?
Your ruffian friend hath ruined me. By Heaven,
I tremble at a thumbnail. Give me drink.

LYDIA. What ho, without there! Bashville.

BASHVILLE [*without*]. Coming, madam.

Enter BASHVILLE

LYDIA. My cousin ails, Bashville. Procure some wet.
[*Exit* BASHVILLE.

LUCIAN. Some wet!!! Where learnt *you* that atrocious word?
This is the language of a flower-girl.

LYDIA. True. It is horrible. Said I "Some wet"?
I meant, some drink. Why did I say "Some wet"?
Am I ensorceled too? "Some wet"! Fie! fie!
I feel as though some hateful thing had stained me.
Oh, Lucian, how could I have said "Some wet"?

LUCIAN. The horrid conversation of this man
Hath numbed thy once unfailing sense of fitness.

LYDIA. Nay, he speaks very well: he's literate:

Shakespear he quotes unconsciously.

LUCIAN. And yet
Anon he talks pure pothouse.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE. Sir: your potion.

LUCIAN. Thanks. [*He drinks.*] I am better.

A NEWSBOY [*calling without*]. Extra special *Star!*
Result of the great fight! Name of the winner!

LYDIA. Who calls so loud?

BASHVILLE. The papers, madam.

LYDIA. Why?
Hath ought momentous happened?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.
[*He produces a newspaper.*
All England for these thrilling paragraphs
A week has waited breathless.

LYDIA. Read them us.

BASHVILLE [*reading*]. "At noon to-day, unknown to the police,
Within a thousand miles of Wormwood Scrubbs,
Th' Australian Champion and his challenger,
The Flying Dutchman, formerly engaged
I' the mercantile marine, fought to a finish.
Lord Worthington, the well-known sporting peer
Acted as referee."

LYDIA. Lord Worthington!

BASHVILLE. "The bold Ned Skene revisited the ropes
To hold the bottle for his quondam novice;
Whilst in the seaman's corner were assembled
Professor Palmer and the Chelsea Snob.
Mellish, whose epigastrium has been hurt,

'Tis said, by accident at Wiltstoken,
Looked none the worse in the Australian's corner.
The Flying Dutchman wore the Union Jack:
His colors freely sold amid the crowd;
But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue——"

LYDIA. *Whose,* did you say?

BASHVILLE. Cashel's, my lady.

LYDIA. Lucian:
Your hand—a chair—

BASHVILLE. Madam: you're ill.

LYDIA. Proceed.
What you have read I do not understand;
Yet I will hear it through. Proceed.

LUCIAN. Proceed.

BASHVILLE. "But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue
Was fairly rushed for. Time was called at twelve,
When, with a smile of confidence upon
His ocean-beaten mug——"

LYDIA. His mug?

LUCIAN [*explaining*]. His face.

BASHVILLE [*continuing*]. "The Dutchman came undaunted to the scratch,
But found the champion there already. Both
Most heartily shook hands, amid the cheers
Of their encouraged backers. Two to one
Was offered on the Melbourne nonpareil;
And soon, so fit the Flying Dutchman seemed,
Found takers everywhere. No time was lost
In getting to the business of the day.
The Dutchman led at once, and seemed to land
On Byron's dicebox; but the seaman's reach,

Too short for execution at long shots,
Did not get fairly home upon the ivory;
And Byron had the best of the exchange."

LYDIA. I do not understand. What were they doing?

LUCIAN. Fighting with naked fists.

LYDIA. Oh, horrible!
I'll hear no more. Or stay: how did it end?
Was Cashel hurt?

LUCIAN [*to* BASHVILLE]. Skip to the final round.

BASHVILLE. "Round Three: the rumors that had gone about
Of a breakdown in Byron's recent training
Seemed quite confirmed. Upon the call of time
He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful,
Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to Mend.
At this point six to one was freely offered
Upon the Dutchman; and Lord Worthington
Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose
A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed certain,
Take down the number of the Panley boy.
The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is,
Seemed this time likely to go hungry. Cashel
Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor,
Who, not to be denied, followed him up,
Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers."

LYDIA. Oh stop—no more—or tell the worst at once.
I'll be revenged. Bashville: call the police.
This brutal sailor shall be made to know
There's law in England.

LUCIAN. Do not interrupt him:
Mine ears are thirsting. Finish, man. What next?

BASHVILLE. "Forty to one, the Dutchman's friends exclaimed.
Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed himself
A sportsman every inch. Barely the bet
Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's jaw
The sailor, bent on winning out of hand,
Sent in his right. The issue seemed a cert,
When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left,
Cross-countered like a hundredweight of brick——"

LUCIAN. Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean?

BASHVILLE. "The Dutchman went to grass, a beaten man."

LYDIA. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well done, Cashel!

BASHVILLE. "A scene of indescribable excitement
Ensued; for it was now quite evident
That Byron's grogginess had all along
Been feigned to make the market for his backers.
We trust this sample of colonial smartness
Will not find imitators on this side.
The losers settled up like gentlemen;
But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste
In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,
And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his oxter,
Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd
The perfect pink of his condition"—[*a knock*].

LYDIA [*turning pale*]. Bashville
Didst hear? A knock.

BASHVILLE. Madam: 'tis Byron's knock.
Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN. Reeking from the ring!

Oh, monstrous! Say you're out.

LYDIA. Send him away.
I will not see the wretch. How dare he keep
Secrets from ME? I'll punish him. Pray say
I'm not at home. [BASHVILLE *turns to go.*] Yet stay.
I am afraid
He will not come again.

LUCIAN. A consummation
Devoutly to be wished by any lady.
Pray, do you *wish* this man to come again?

LYDIA. No, Lucian. He hath used me very ill.
He should have told me. I will ne'er forgive him.
Say, Not at home.

BASHVILLE. Yes, madam. [*Exit.*

LYDIA. Stay—

LUCIAN [*stopping her*]. No, Lydia:
You shall not countermand that proper order.
Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,
The thousands at your bank, and, above all,
Your unassailable social position
Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn?

LYDIA. Nay, coz: you're prejudiced.

CASHEL [*without*]. Liar and slave!

LYDIA. What words were those?

LUCIAN. The man is drunk with slaughter.

Enter BASHVILLE *running: he shuts the door and locks it.*

BASHVILLE. Save yourselves: at the staircase foot the champion
Sprawls on the mat, by trick of wrestler tripped;
But when he rises, woe betide us all!

LYDIA. Who bade you treat my visitor with violence?

BASHVILLE. He would not take my answer; thrust the door
Back in my face; gave me the lie i' the throat;
Averred he felt your presence in his bones.
I said he should feel mine there too, and felled him;
Then fled to bar your door.
LYDIA. O lover's instinct!
He felt my presence. Well, let him come in.
We must not fail in courage with a fighter.
Unlock the door.
LUCIAN. Stop. Like all women, Lydia,
You have the courage of immunity.
To strike *you* were against his code of honor;
But *me,* above the belt, he may perform on
T' th' height of his profession. Also Bashville.
BASHVILLE. Think not of me, sir. Let him do his worst.
Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh
The fatal difference twixt his weight and mine,
A second battle should he do this day:
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my mistress
Give me the word: instant I'll take him on
Here—now—at catchweight. Better bite the carpet
A man, than fly, a coward.
LUCIAN. Bravely said:
I will assist you with the poker.
LYDIA. No:
I will not have him touched. Open the door.
BASHVILLE. Destruction knocks thereat. I smile, and open.

[BASHVILLE *opens the door. Dead silence.* CASHEL *enters, in tears. A solemn pause.*

CASHEL. You know my secret?

LYDIA. Yes.

CASHEL. And thereupon
You bade your servant fling me from your door.

LYDIA. I bade my servant say I was not here.

CASHEL [*to* BASHVILLE]. Why didst thou better thy instruction, man?
Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee this,"
Thoudst burst my heart. I thank thee for thy mercy.

LYDIA. Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him "drunk with slaughter"?
Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?

CASHEL [*to* LUCIAN]. The unwritten law that shields the amateur
Against professional resentment, saves thee.
O coward, to traduce behind their backs
Defenceless prizefighters!

LUCIAN. Thou dost avow
Thou art a prizefighter.

CASHEL. It was my glory.
I had hoped to offer to my lady there
My belts, my championships, my heaped-up stakes,
My undefeated record; but I knew
Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked.

LYDIA. Another secret?

LUCIAN. Is there worse to come?

CASHEL. Know ye not then my mother is an actress?

LUCIAN. How horrible!

LYDIA. Nay, nay: how interesting!

CASHEL. A thousand victories cannot wipe out
That birthstain. Oh, my speech bewrayeth it:
My earliest lesson was the player's speech

In Hamlet; and to this day I express myself
More like a mobled queen than like a man
Of flesh and blood. Well may your cousin sneer!
What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba?

LUCIAN. Injurious upstart: if by Hecuba
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,
Know that she is to me, and I to her,
What never canst thou be. I do defy thee;
And maugre all the odds thy skill doth give,
Outside I will await thee.

LYDIA. I forbid
Expressly any such duello. Bashville:
The door. Put Mr. Webber in a hansom,
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street.
No answer: 'tis my will.

[*Exeunt* LUCIAN *and* BASHVILLE.

And now, farewell.
You must not come again, unless indeed
You can some day look in my eyes and say:
Lydia: my occupation's gone.

CASHEL. Ah, no:
It would remind you of my wretched mother.
O God, let me be natural a moment!
What other occupation can I try?
What would you have me be?

LYDIA. A gentleman.

CASHEL. A gentleman! I, Cashel Byron, stoop
To be the thing that bets on me! the fool
I flatter at so many coins a lesson!
The screaming creature who beside the ring
Gambles with basest wretches for my blood,
And pays with money that he never earned!

Let me die broken hearted rather!

LYDIA. But
You need not be an idle gentleman.
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen.

CASHEL. That's the collection for the loser, Lydia.
I am not wont to need it. When your friends
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll
Rue their presumption, 'tis their wont to claim
A moral victory. In a sort they are
Nature's M. P.s. I am not yet so threadbare
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA. You are offended with me.

CASHEL. Yes, I am.
I can put up with much; but—"Nature's gentleman"!
I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but
Must beg to be excused.

LYDIA. But surely, surely,
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners
With naked knuckles, is no work for you.

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive Fates
That weave my thread of life in ruder patterns
Than these that lie, antimacassarly,
Asprent thy drawingroom. As well demand
Why I at birth chose to begin my life
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance?
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave?
Only one thing more foolish could have been,
And that was to be born, not man, but woman.

This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine?

LYDIA. These are not things of choice.

CASHEL. And did I choose
My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,
My springing muscle and untiring heart?
Did I implant the instinct in the race
That found a use for these, and said to me,
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine?

LYDIA. But there are other callings in the world.

CASHEL. Go tell thy painters to turn stockbrokers,
Thy poet friends to stoop o'er merchants' desks
And pen prose records of the gains of greed.
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker
Opes new careers. Bid the professor quit
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the world
The thing he would teach others. Then return
To me and say: Cashel: they have obeyed;
And on that pyre of sacrifice I, too,
Will throw my championship.

LYDIA. But 'tis so cruel.

CASHEL. Is it so? I have hardly noticed that,
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,
That many a two days' bruise hath ruthless given,
Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty years,
Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport.
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,
The world that robs the poor, and with their spoil
Does what its tradesmen tell it. Oh, your ladies!
Sealskinned and egret-feathered; all defiance
To Nature; cowering if one say to them

"What will the servants think?" Your gentlemen!
Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood
Make chickenbutchers. And your medicine men!
Groping for cures in the tormented entrails
Of friendly dogs. Pray have you asked all these
To change their occupations? Find you mine
So grimly crueller? I cannot breathe
An air so petty and so poisonous.

LYDIA. But find you not their manners very nice?

CASHEL. To me, perfection. Oh, they condescend
With a rare grace. Your duke, who condescends
Almost to the whole world, might for a Man
Pass in the eyes of those who never saw
The duke capped with a prince. See then, ye gods,
The duke turn footman, and his eager dame
Sink the great lady in the obsequious housemaid!
Oh, at such moments I could wish the Court
Had but one breadbasket, that with my fist
I could make all its windy vanity
Gasp itself out on the gravel. Fare you well.
I did not choose my calling; but at least
I can refrain from being a gentleman.

LYDIA. You say farewell to me without a pang.

CASHEL. My calling hath apprenticed me to pangs.
This is a rib-bender; but I can bear it.
It is a lonely thing to be a champion.

LYDIA. It is a lonelier thing to be a woman.

CASHEL. Be lonely then. Shall it be said of thee
That for his brawn thou misalliance mad'st
Wi' the Prince of Ruffians? Never. Go thy ways;
Or, if thou hast nostalgia of the mud,

Wed some bedoggéd wretch that on the slot
Of gilded snobbery, *ventre à terre,*
Will hunt through life with eager nose on earth
And hang thee thick with diamonds. I am rich;
But all my gold was fought for with my hands.

LYDIA. What dost thou mean by rich?

CASHEL. There is a man,
Hight Paradise, vaunted unconquerable,
Hath dared to say he will be glad to hear from me.
I have replied that none can hear from *me*
Until a thousand solid pounds be staked.
His friends have confidently found the money.
Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine;
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds.
I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum.

LYDIA. Thou silly Cashel, 'tis but a week's income.
I did propose to give thee three times that
For pocket money when we two were wed.

CASHEL. Give me my hat. I have been fooling here.
Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought
That only in America such revenues
Were decent deemed. Enough. My dream is dreamed.
Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest.
Farewell.

LYDIA. The golden mountain shall be thine
The day thou quit'st thy horrible profession.

CASHEL. Tempt me not, woman. It is honor calls.
Slave to the Ring I rest until the face
Of Paradise be changed.

Enter BASHVILLE

BASHVILLE. Madam, your carriage,
Ordered by you at two. 'Tis now half-past.

CASHEL. Sdeath! is it half-past two? The king! the king!

LYDIA. The king! What mean you?

CASHEL. I must meet a monarch
This very afternoon at Islington.

LYDIA. At Islington! You must be mad.

CASHEL. A cab!
Go call a cab; and let a cab be called;
And let the man that calls it be thy footman.

LYDIA. You are not well. You shall not go alone.
My carriage waits. I must accompany you.
I go to find my hat. [*Exit.*

CASHEL. Like Paracelsus,
Who went to find his soul. [*To* BASHVILLE.] And now, young man,
How comes it that a fellow of your inches,
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me
On your next evening out. I'll make a man of you.
Surely you are ambitious and aspire——

BASHVILLE. To be a butler and draw corks; wherefore,
By Heaven, I will draw yours.

[*He hits* CASHEL *on the nose, and runs out.*

CASHEL [*thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger to his nose, and studying the blood on it*]. Too quick for *me!*
There's money in this youth.

Re-enter LYDIA, *hatted and gloved.*

LYDIA. O Heaven! you bleed.

CASHEL. Lend me a key or other frigid object,

That I may put it down my back, and staunch
The welling life stream.

LYDIA [*giving him her keys*]. Oh, what *have* you done?

CASHEL. Flush on the boko napped your footman's left.

LYDIA. I do not understand.

CASHEL. True. Pardon me.
I have received a blow upon the nose
In sport from Bashville. Next, ablution; else
I shall be total gules. [*He hurries out.*

LYDIA. How well he speaks!
There is a silver trumpet in his lips
That stirs me to the finger ends. His nose
Dropt lovely color: 'tis a perfect blood.
I would 'twere mingled with mine own!

Enter BASHVILLE

What now?

BASHVILLE. Madam, the coachman can no longer wait:
The horses will take cold.

LYDIA. I do beseech him
A moment's grace. Oh, mockery of wealth!
The third class passenger unchidden rides
Whither and when he will: obsequious trams
Await him hourly: subterranean tubes
With tireless coursers whisk him through the town;
But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms:
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their hay.

BASHVILLE. Madam, an omnibus to Euston Road,

And thence t' th' Angel—

Enter CASHEL

LYDIA. Let us haste, my love:
The coachman is impatient.

CASHEL. Did he guess
He stays for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait
Pompei's sentinel. Let us away.
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,
Must ended be in merrie Islington.

[*Exeunt* LYDIA *and* CASHEL.

BASHVILLE. Gods! how she hangs on's arm! I am alone.
Now let me lift the cover from my soul.
O wasted humbleness! Deluded diffidence!
How often have I said, Lie down, poor footman:
She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt
Thy powder to the sky. And now, by Heaven,
She stoops below me; condescends upon
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,
Writ in my character from my last place,
Would damn me into ostlerdom. And yet
There's an eternal justice in it; for
By so much as the ne'er subdued Indian
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian
Precedence take of me. "*Ich dien.*" Damnation!
I serve. My motto should have been, "I scalp."
And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold.
Because I love her I have blacked her boots;
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,
Doing in this the office of a boy,
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks

And does the meanest chares, I've shared the passions
Of Cleopatra. It has been my pride
To give her place the greater altitude
By lowering mine, and of her dignity
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace
As love for such a one as I would be
For such a one as she; and now! and now!
A prizefighter! O irony! O bathos!
To have made way for this! Oh, Bashville, Bashville:
Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,
So heavenly high of her? Let what will come,
My love must speak: 'twas my respect was dumb.

Scene II

The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded with spectators. In the arena a throne, with a boxing ring before it. A balcony above on the right, occupied by persons of fashion: among others, Lydia *and* Lord Worthington.

Flourish. Enter Lucian *and* Cetewayo, *with Chiefs in attendance.*

CETEWAYO. Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?

LUCIAN. It is.

CETEWAYO. Are these anæmic dogs the English people?

LUCIAN. Mislike us not for our complexions,
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our factories,
And by the million patent kitchen ranges

Of happy English homes.

CETEWAYO. When first I came
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous altars
Of some infernal god. I now perceive
The English dare not look upon the sky.
They are moles and owls: they call upon the soot
To cover them.

LUCIAN. You cannot understand
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo.
You are a savage, reasoning like a child.
Each pallid English face conceals a brain
Whose powers are proven in the works of Newton
And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear.
There is not one of all the thousands here
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,
Woud presently construct a steam engine,
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes.

CETEWAYO. Have I been brought a million miles by sea
To learn how men can lie! Know, Father Webber,
Men become civilized through twin diseases,
Terror and Greed to wit: these two conjoined
Become the grisly parents of Invention.
Why does the trembling white with frantic toil
Of hand and brain produce the magic gun
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu
Dares look his foe i' the face; fights foot to foot;
Lives in the present; drains the Here and Now;
Makes life a long reality, and death
A moment only! whilst your Englishman
Glares on his burning candle's winding-sheets,
Counting the steps of his approaching doom.

And in the murky corners ever sees
Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty:
In the which anguish an unnatural edge
Comes on his frighted brain, which straight devises
Strange frauds by which to filch unearnéd gold,
Mad crafts by which to slay unfacéd foes,
Until at last his agonized desire
Makes possibility its slave. And then—
Horrible climax! All-undoing spite!—
Th' importunate clutching of the coward's hand
From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets
Doth wrest; when straight the brave black-livered man
Is blown explosively from off the globe;
And Death and Dread, with their white-livered slaves
O'er-run the earth, and through their chattering teeth
Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest."
Enough of this: I came not here to talk.
Thou say'st thou hast two white-faced ones who dare
Fight without guns, and spearless, to the death.
Let them be brought.

LUCIAN. They fight not to the death,
But under strictest rules: as, for example,
Half of their persons shall not be attacked;
Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall down,
Nor stroke of foot at any time. And, further,
That frequent opportunities of rest
With succor and refreshment be secured them.

CETEWAYO. Ye gods, what cowards! Zululand, my Zululand:
Personified Pusillanimity
Hath ta'en thee from the bravest of the brave!

LUCIAN. Lo, the rude savage whose untutored mind

Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts
That Brave and English mean the self-same thing!

CETEWAYO. Well, well, produce these heroes. I surmise
They will be carried by their nurses, lest
Some barking dog or bumbling bee should scare them.

CETEWAYO *takes his state. Enter* PARADISE

LYDIA. What hateful wretch is this whose mighty thews
Presage destruction to his adversaries?

LORD WORTHINGTON. 'Tis Paradise,

LYDIA. He of whom Cashel spoke?
A dreadful thought ices my heart. Oh, why
Did Cashel leave us at the door?

Enter CASHEL

LORD WORTHINGTON. Behold!
The champion comes.

LYDIA. Oh, I could kiss him now,
Here, before all the world. His boxing things
Render him most attractive. But I fear
Yon villain's fists may maul him.

WORTHINGTON. Have no fear.
Hark! the king speaks.

CETEWAYO. Ye sons of the white queen:
Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to.

PARADISE. Your royal highness, you beholds a bloke
What gets his living honest by his fists.
I may not have the polish of some toffs
As I could mention on; but up to now
No man has took my number down. I scale

Close on twelve stun; my age is twenty-three;
And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub
Am to be heard of any day by such
As likes the job. I don't know, governor,
As ennythink remains for me to say.

CETEWAYO. Six wives and thirty oxen shalt thou have
If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead.
Methinks he looks scornfully on thee.
[*To* CASHEL] Ha! dost thou not so?

CASHEL. Sir, I do beseech you
To name the bone, or limb, or special place
Where you would have me hit him with this fist.

CETEWAYO. Thou hast a noble brow; but much I fear
Thine adversary will disfigure it.

CASHEL. There's a divinity that shapes our ends
Rough hew them how we will. Give me the gloves.

THE MASTER OF THE REVELS. Paradise, a professor.
Cashel Byron,
Also professor. Time! [*They spar.*

LYDIA. Eternity
It seems to me until this fight be done.

CASHEL. Dread monarch: this is called the upper cut,
And this a hook-hit of mine own invention.
The hollow region where I plant this blow
Is called the mark. My left, you will observe,
I chiefly use for long shots: with my right
Aiming beside the angle of the jaw
And landing with a certain delicate screw
I without violence knock my foeman out.
Mark how he falls forward upon his face!
The rules allow ten seconds to get up;
And as the man is still quite silly, I

Might safely finish him; but my respect
For your most gracious majesty's desire
To see some further triumphs of the science
Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom.

PARADISE. How can a bloke do hisself proper justice
With pillows on his fists?

[*He tears off his gloves and attacks* CASHEL *with his bare knuckles.*

THE CROWD. Unfair! The rules!

CETEWAYO. The joy of battle surges boiling up
And bids me join the mellay. Isandhlana
And Victory! [*He falls on the bystanders.*

THE CHIEFS. Victory and Isandhlana!

[*They run amok. General panic and stampede. The ring is swept away.*

LUCIAN. Forbear these most irregular proceedings.
Police! Police!

[*He engages* CETEWAYO *with his umbrella. The balcony comes down with a crash. Screams from its occupants. Indescribable confusion.*

CASHEL [*dragging* LYDIA *from the struggling heap*]. My love, my love, art hurt?

LYDIA. No, no; but save my sore o'ermatchéd cousin.

A POLICEMAN. Give us a lead, sir. Save the English flag.
Africa tramples on it.

CASHEL. Africa!
Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders
The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck
Shall trample on the blue with spots of white.
Now, Lydia, mark thy lover. [*He charges the Zulus.*

LYDIA. Hercules

Cannot withstand him. See: the king is down;
The tallest chief is up, heels over head,
Tossed corklike o'er my Cashel's sinewy back;
And his lieutenant all deflated gasps
For breath upon the sand. The others fly
In vain: his fist o'er magic distances
Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its mark;
And the last African upon his knees
Sues piteously for quarter. [*Rushing into* CASHEL'S *arms.*] Oh, my hero:
Thou'st saved us all this day.

CASHEL. 'Twas all for thee.

CETEWAYO [*trying to rise*]. Have I been struck by lightning?

LUCIAN. Sir, your conduct
Can only be described as most ungentlemanly.

POLICEMAN. One of the prone is white.

CASHEL. 'Tis Paradise.

POLICEMAN. He's choking: he has something in his mouth.

LYDIA [*to* CASHEL]. Oh Heaven! there is blood upon your hip.
You're hurt.

CASHEL. The morsel in yon wretch's mouth
Was bitten out of me.

[*Sensation.* LYDIA *screams and swoons in* CASHEL'S *arms.*

ACT III

Wiltstoken. A room in the Warren Lodge

LYDIA *at her writing table*

LYDIA. O Past and Present, how ye do conflict
As here I sit writing my father's life!
The autumn woodland woos me from without
With whispering of leaves and dainty airs
To leave this fruitless haunting of the past.
My father was a very learnéd man.
I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be
Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me.

Enter POLICEMAN

POLICEMAN. Asking your ladyship to pardon me
For this intrusion, might I be so bold
As ask a question of your people here
Concerning the Queen's peace?
LYDIA. My people here
Are but a footman and a simple maid;
And both have craved a holiday to join
Some local festival. But, sir, your helmet
Proclaims the Metropolitan Police.
POLICEMAN. Madam, it does; and I may now inform you
That what you term a local festival
Is a most hideous outrage 'gainst the law,
Which we to quell from London have come down:
In short, a prizefight. My sole purpose here
Is to inquire whether your ladyship

Any bad characters this afternoon
Has noted in the neighborhood.

LYDIA. No, none, sir.
I had not let my maid go forth to-day
Thought I the roads unsafe.

POLICEMAN. Fear nothing, madam:
The force protects the fair. My mission here
Is to wreak ultion for the broken law.
I wish your ladyship good afternoon.

LYDIA. Good afternoon. [*Exit* POLICEMAN.
A prizefight! O my heart!
Cashel: hast thou deceived me? Can it be
Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling
I asked thee to eschew?
O wretched maid,
Why didst thou flee from London to this place
To write thy father's life, whenas in town
Thou might'st have kept a guardian eye on him—
What's that? A flying footstep—

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL. Sanctuary!
The law is on my track. What! Lydia here!

LYDIA. Ay: Lydia here. Hast thou done murder, then,
That in so horrible a guise thou comest?

CASHEL. Murder! I would I had. Yon cannibal
Hath forty thousand lives; and I have ta'en
But thousands thirty-nine. I tell thee, Lydia,
On the impenetrable sarcolobe
That holds his seedling brain these fists have pounded
By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour. This bruiséd grass
And cakéd mud adhering to my form

I have acquired in rolling on the sod
Clinched in his grip. This scanty reefer coat
For decency snatched up as fast I fled
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish.
'Tis all too short; hence my display of rib
And forearm mother-naked. Be not wroth
Because I seem to wink at you: by Heaven,
'Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye
Which I perforce keep closing. Pity me,
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything
I had hoped to win. Oh, I could sit me down
And weep for bitterness.

LYDIA. Thou wretch, begone.

CASHEL. Begone!

LYDIA. I say begone. Oh, tiger's heart
Wrapped in a young man's hide, canst thou not live
In love with Nature and at peace with Man?
Must thou, although thy hands were never made
To blacken others' eyes, still batter at
The image of Divinity? I loathe thee.
Hence from my house and never see me more.

CASHEL. I go. The meanest lad on thy estate
Would not betray me thus. But 'tis no matter.
[*He opens the door.*
Ha! the police. I'm lost. [*He shuts the door again.*
Now shalt thou see
My last fight fought. Exhausted as I am,
To capture me will cost the coppers dear.
Come one, come all!

LYDIA. Oh, hide thee, I implore:
I cannot see thee hunted down like this.

There is my room. Conceal thyself therein.
Quick, I command. [*He goes into the room.*
With horror I foresee,
Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee.

Enter POLICEMAN, *with* PARADISE *and* MELLISH *in custody,* BASHVILLE, *constables, and others*

POLICEMAN. Keep back your bruiséd prisoner lest he shock
This wellbred lady's nerves. Your pardon, ma'am;
But have you seen by chance the other one?
In this direction he was seen to run.
LYDIA. A man came here anon with bloody hands
And aspect that did turn my soul to snow.
POLICEMAN. 'Twas he. What said he?
LYDIA. Begged for sanctuary.
I bade the man begone.
POLICEMAN. Most properly.
Saw you which way he went?
LYDIA. I cannot tell.
PARADISE. He seen me coming; and he done a bunk.
POLICEMAN. Peace, there. Excuse his damaged features, lady:
He's Paradise; and this one's Byron's trainer,
Mellish.
MELLISH. Injurious copper, in thy teeth
I hurl the lie. I am no trainer, I.
My father, a respected missionary,
Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age
T' the poetry writing. To these woods I came
With Nature to commune. My revery
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled.

Mindful of what my sainted parent taught,
I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo!
These minions of the law laid hands on me.

BASHVILLE. A lovely woman, with distracted cries,
In most resplendent fashionable frock,
Approaches like a wounded antelope.

Enter ADELAIDE GISBORNE

ADELAIDE. Where is my Cashel? Hath he been arrested?

POLICEMAN. I would I had thy Cashel by the collar:
He hath escaped me.

ADELAIDE. Praises be for ever!

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man *thy* Cashel?

ADELAIDE. He is mine only son.

ALL. Thy son!

ADELAIDE. My son.

LYDIA. I thought his mother hardly would have known him,
So crushed his countenance.

ADELAIDE. A ribald peer,
Lord Worthington by name, this morning came
With honeyed words beseeching me to mount
His four-in-hand, and to the country hie
To see some English sport. Being by nature
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,
But took so long to dress that the design
Failed of its full effect; for not until
The final round we reached the horrid scene.
Be silent all; for now I do approach
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,

That Heaven did bless me with an only son,
A boy devoted to his doting mother——

POLICEMAN. Hark! did you hear an oath from yonder room?

ADELAIDE. Respect a broken-hearted mother's grief,
And do not interrupt me in my scene.
Ten years ago my darling disappeared
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous tears,
Tears that have left me prematurely aged;
For I am younger far than I appear).
Judge of my anguish when to-day I saw
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a demon
With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son!

ALL. O strange event! O passing tearful tale!

ADELAIDE. I thank you from the bottom of my heart
For the reception you have given my woe;
And now I ask, where is my wretched son?
He must at once come home with me, and quit
A course of life that cannot be allowed.

Enter CASHEL

CASHEL. Policeman: I do yield me to the law.

LYDIA. Oh, no.

ADELAIDE. My son!

CASHEL. My mother! Do not kiss me.
My visage is too sore.

POLICEMAN. The lady hid him.
This is a regular plant. You cannot be
Up to that sex. [*To* CASHEL] You come along with me.

LYDIA. Fear not, my Cashel: I will bail thee out.

CASHEL. Never. I do embrace my doom with joy.

With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland
I shall feel safe: there are no mothers there.

ADELAIDE. Ungracious boy—

CASHEL. Constable: bear me hence.

MELLISH. Oh, let me sweetest reconcilement make
By calling to thy mind that moving song:—

[*Sings*] They say there is no other—

CASHEL. Forbear at once, or the next note of music
That falls upon thine ear shall clang in thunder
From the last trumpet.

ADELAIDE. A disgraceful threat
To level at this virtuous old man.

LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scorn'st thy mother thus,
How wilt thou treat thy wife?

CASHEL. There spake my fate:
I knew you would say that. Oh, mothers, mothers,
Would you but let your wretched sons alone
Life were worth living! Had I any choice
In this importunate relationship?
None. And until that high auspicious day
When the millennium on an orphaned world
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother
And I within the self-same hemisphere
Conjointly may not dwell.

ADELAIDE. Ungentlemanly!

CASHEL. I am no gentleman. I am a criminal,
Redhanded, baseborn—

ADELAIDE. Baseborn! Who dares say it?
Thou art the son and heir of Bingley Bumpkin
FitzAlgernon de Courcy Cashel Byron,

Sieur of Park Lane and Overlord of Dorset,
Who after three months' wedded happiness
Rashly fordid himself with prussic acid,
Leaving a tearstained note to testify
That having sweetly honeymooned with me,
He now could say, O Death, where is thy sting?

POLICEMAN. Sir: had I known your quality, this cop
I had averted; but it is too late.
The law's above us both.

Enter LUCIAN, *with an Order in Council*

LUCIAN. Not so, policeman
I bear a message from The Throne itself
Of fullest amnesty for Byron's past.
Nay, more: of Dorset deputy lieutenant
He is proclaimed. Further, it is decreed,
In memory of his glorious victory
Over our country's foes at Islington,
The flag of England shall for ever bear
On azure field twelve swanlike spots of white;
And by an exercise of feudal right
Too long disused in this anarchic age
Our sovereign doth confer on him the hand
Of Miss Carew, Wiltstoken's wealthy heiress.

[*General acclamation.*

POLICEMAN. Was anything, sir, said about me?

LUCIAN. Thy faithful services are not forgot:
In future call thyself Inspector Smith.

[*Renewed acclamation.*

POLICEMAN. I thank you, sir. I thank you, gentlemen.

LUCIAN. My former opposition, valiant champion,

Was based on the supposed discrepancy
Betwixt your rank and Lydia's. Here's my hand.

BASHVILLE. And I do here unselfishly renounce
All my pretensions to my lady's favor. [*Sensation.*

LYDIA. What, Bashville! didst thou love me?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.
'Tis said: now let me leave immediately.

LYDIA. In taking, Bashville, this most tasteful course
You are but acting as a gentleman
In the like case would act. I fully grant
Your perfect right to make a declaration
Which flatters me and honors your ambition.
Prior attachment bids me firmly say
That whilst my Cashel lives, and polyandry
Rests foreign to the British social scheme,
Your love is hopeless; still, your services,
Made zealous by disinterested passion,
Would greatly add to my domestic comfort;
And if——

CASHEL. Excuse me. I have other views.
I've noted in this man such aptitude
For art and exercise in his defence
That I prognosticate for him a future
More glorious than my past. Henceforth I dub him
The Admirable Bashville, Byron's Novice;
And to the utmost of my mended fortunes
Will back him 'gainst the world at ten stone six.

ALL. Hail, Byron's Novice, champion that shall be!

BASHVILLE. Must I renounce my lovely lady's service,
And mar the face of man?

CASHEL. 'Tis Fate's decree.
For know, rash youth, that in this star crost world

Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good
In what we *can*, and not in what we *would*.

POLICEMAN. A post-horn—hark!

CASHEL. What noise of wheels is this?

LORD WORTHINGTON *drives upon the scene in his four-in-hand, and descends*

ADELAIDE. Perfidious peer!

LORD WORTHINGTON. Sweet Adelaide——

ADELAIDE. Forbear,
Audacious one: my name is Mrs. Byron.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Oh, change that title for the sweeter one
Of Lady Worthington.

CASHEL. Unhappy man,
You know not what you do.

LYDIA. Nay, 'tis a match
Of most auspicious promise. Dear Lord Worthington,
You tear from us our mother-in-law—

CASHEL. Ha! true.

LYDIA. —but we will make the sacrifice. She blushes:
At least she very prettily produces
Blushing's effect.

ADELAIDE. My lord: I do accept you.

[*They embrace. Rejoicings.*

CASHEL [*aside*]. It wrings my heart to see my noble backer
Lay waste his future thus. The world's a chessboard,
And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate.
[*Aloud.*] And now, my friends, gentle and simple both,
Our scene draws to a close. In lawful course
As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I

Do pardon all concerned this afternoon
In the late gross and brutal exhibition
Of miscalled sport.

LYDIA [*throwing herself into his arms*]. Your boats are burnt at last.

CASHEL. This is the face that burnt a thousand boats,
And ravished Cashel Byron from the ring.
But to conclude. Let William Paradise
Devote himself to science, and acquire,
By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,
A more refined address. You, Robert Mellish,
To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him;
Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson
Limit his access to the fatal tap.
Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,
And to St. George's Church, whose portico
Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit Street,
Repair we all. Strike up the wedding march;
And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth
Broad o'er the wold as fast we bowl along.
Give me the post-horn. Loose the flowing rein;
And up to London drive with might and main.

[*Exeunt.*

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NOTE ON MODERN PRIZEFIGHTING

Note on Modern Prizefighting

In 1882, when this book was written, prizefighting seemed to be dying out. Sparring matches with boxing gloves, under the Queensberry rules, kept pugilism faintly alive; but it was not popular, because the public, which cares only for the excitement of a strenuous fight, believed then that the boxing glove made sparring as harmless a contest of pure skill as a fencing match with buttoned foils. This delusion was supported by the limitation of the sparring match to boxing. In the prize-ring under the old rules a combatant might trip, hold, or throw his antagonist; so that each round finished either with a knockdown blow, which, except when it is really a liedown blow, is much commoner in fiction than it was in the ring, or with a visible body-to-body struggle ending in a fall. In a sparring match all that happens is that a man with a watch in his hand cries out "Time!" whereupon the two champions prosaically stop sparring and sit down for a minute's rest and refreshment. The unaccustomed and inexpert spectator in those days did not appreciate the severity of the exertion or the risk of getting hurt: he underrated them as ignorantly as he would have overrated the more dramatically obvious terrors of a prizefight. Consequently the interest in the annual sparrings for the Queensberry Championships was confined to the few amateurs who had some critical knowledge of the game of boxing, and to the survivors of the generation

for which the fight between Sayers and Heenan had been described in The Times as solemnly as the University Boat Race. In short, pugilism was out of fashion because the police had suppressed the only form of it which fascinated the public by its undissembled pugnacity.

All that was needed to rehabilitate it was the discovery that the glove fight is a more trying and dangerous form of contest than the old knuckle fight. Nobody knew that then: everybody knows it, or ought to know it, now. And, accordingly, pugilism is more prosperous to-day than it has ever been before.

How far this result was foreseen by the author of the Queensberry Rules, which superseded those of the old prize-ring, will probably never be known. There is no doubt that they served their immediate turn admirably. That turn was, the keeping alive of boxing in the teeth of the law against prizefighting. Magistrates believed, as the public believed, that when men's knuckles were muffled in padded gloves; when they were forbidden to wrestle or hold one another; when the duration of a round was fixed by the clock, and the number of rounds limited to what seems (to those who have never tried) to be easily within the limits of ordinary endurance; and when the traditional interval for rest between the rounds was doubled, that then indeed violence must be checkmated, so that the worst the boxers could do was to " spar for points " before three gentlemanly members of the Stock Exchange, who would carefully note the said points on an examination paper at the ring side, awarding marks only for skill and elegance, and sternly discountenancing the claims of brute force. It may be that both the author of the rules and the " judges " who

administered them in the earlier days really believed all this; for, as far as I know, the limit of an amateur pugilist's romantic credulity has never yet been reached and probably never will. But if so, their good intentions were upset by the operation of a single new rule. Thus.

In the old prize-ring a round had no fixed duration. It was terminated by the fall of one of the combatants (in practice usually both of them), and was followed by an interval of half a minute for recuperation. The practical effect of this was that a combatant could always get a respite of half a minute whenever he wanted it by pretending to be knocked down: "finding the earth the safest place," as the old phrase went. For this the Marquess of Queensberry substituted a rule that a round with the gloves should last a specified time, usually three or four minutes, and that a combatant who did not stand up to his opponent continuously during that time (ten seconds being allowed for rising in the event of a knock-down) lost the battle. That unobtrusively slipped-in ten seconds limit has produced the modern glove fight. Its practical effect is that a man dazed by a blow or a fall for, say, twelve seconds, which would not have mattered in an old-fashioned fight with its thirty seconds interval,[1] has under the Queensberry rules either to lose

[1] In a treatise on boxing by Captain Edgeworth Johnstone, just published, I read, "In the days of the prize-ring, fights lasted for hours; and the knock-out blow was unknown." This statement is a little too sweeping. The blow was known well enough. A veteran prizefighter once described to me his first experience of its curious effect on the senses. Only, as he had thirty seconds to recover in instead of ten, it did not end the battle. The thirty seconds made the knock-out so unlikely that the old pugilists regarded it as a rare accident, not worth trying for. The glove fighter

or else stagger to his feet in a helpless condition and be eagerly battered into insensibility by his opponent before he can recover his powers of self-defence. The notion that such a battery cannot be inflicted with boxing gloves is only entertained by people who have never used them or seen them used. I may say that I have myself received, in an accident, a blow in the face, involving two macadamized holes in it, more violent than the most formidable pugilist could have given me with his bare knuckles. This blow did not stun or disable me even momentarily. On the other hand, I have seen a man knocked quite silly by a tap from the most luxurious sort of boxing glove made, wielded by a quite unathletic literary man sparring for the first time in his life. The human jaw, like the human elbow, is provided, as every boxer knows, with a "funny bone"; and the pugilist who is lucky enough to jar that funny bone with a blow practically has his opponent at his mercy for at least ten seconds. Such a blow is called a "knock-out." The funny bone and the ten-seconds rule explain the development of Queensberry sparring into the modern knocking-out match or glove fight.

This development got its first impulse from the discovery by sparring competitors that the only way in

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tries for nothing else. Nevertheless knock-outs, and very dramatic ones too (Mace by King, for example), did occur in the prize-ring from time to time. Captain Edgeworth Johnstone's treatise is noteworthy in comparison with the earlier Badminton handbook of sparring by Mr. E. B. Michell (one of the Queensberry champions) as throwing over the old teaching of prize-ring boxing with mufflers, and going in frankly for glove fighting, or, to put it classically, cestus boxing.

which a boxer, however skilful, could make sure of a verdict in his favor, was by knocking his opponent out. This will be easily understood by any one who remembers the pugilistic Bench of those days. The "judges" at the competitions were invariably ex-champions: that is, men who had themselves won former competitions. Now the judicial faculty, if it is not altogether a legal fiction, is at all events pretty rare even among men whose ordinary pursuits tend to cultivate it, and to train them in dispassionateness. Among pugilists it is quite certainly very often non-existent. The average pugilist is a violent partisan, who seldom witnesses a hot encounter without getting much more excited than the combatants themselves. Further, he is usually filled with a local patriotism which makes him, if a Londoner, deem it a duty to disparage a provincial, and, if a provincial, to support a provincial at all hazards against a cockney. He has, besides, personal favorites on whose success he bets wildly. On great occasions like the annual competitions, he is less judicial and more convivial after dinner (when the finals are sparred) than before it. Being seldom a fine boxer, he often regards skill and style as a reflection on his own deficiencies, and applauds all verdicts given for "game" alone. When he is a technically good boxer, he is all the less likely to be a good critic, as Providence seldom lavishes two rare gifts on the same individual. Even if we take the sanguine and patriotic view that when you appoint such a man a judge, and thus stop his betting, you may depend on his sense of honor and responsibility to neutralize all the other disqualifications, they are sure to be exhibited most extremely by the audience before which he has to deliver

his verdict. Now it takes a good deal of strength of mind to give an unpopular verdict; and this strength of mind is not necessarily associated with the bodily hardihood of the champion boxer. Consequently, when the strength of mind is not forthcoming, the audience becomes the judge, and the popular competitor gets the verdict. And the shortest way to the heart of a big audience is to stick to your man; stop his blows bravely with your nose and return them with interest; cover yourself and him with your own gore; and outlast him in a hearty punching match.

It was under these circumstances that the competitors for sparring championships concluded that they had better decide the bouts themselves by knocking their opponents out, and waste no time in cultivating a skill and style for which they got little credit, and which actually set some of the judges against them. The public instantly began to take an interest in the sport. And so, by a pretty rapid evolution, the dexterities which the boxing glove and the Queensberry rules were supposed to substitute for the old brutalities of Sayers and Heenan were really abolished by them.

Let me describe the process as I saw it myself. Twenty years ago a poet friend of mine, who, like all poets, delighted in combats, insisted on my sharing his interest in pugilism, and took me about to all the boxing competitions of the day. I was nothing loth; for, my own share of original sin apart, any one with a sense of comedy must find the arts of self-defence delightful (for a time) through their pedantry, their quackery, and their action and reaction between amateur romantic illusion and professional eye to business.

The fencing world, as Molière well knew, is perhaps a more exquisite example of a fool's paradise than the boxing world; but it is too restricted and expensive to allow play for popular character in a non-duelling country, as the boxing world (formerly called quite appropriately "the Fancy") does. At all events, it was the boxing world that came under my notice; and as I was amused and sceptically observant, whilst the true amateurs about me were, for the most part, merely excited and duped, my evidence may have a certain value when the question comes up again for legislative consideration, as it assuredly will some day.

The first competitions I attended were at the beginning of the eighties, at Lillie Bridge, for the Queensberry championships. There were but few competitors, including a fair number of gentlemen; and the style of boxing aimed at was the "science" bequeathed from the old prize-ring by Ned Donnelly, a pupil of Nat Langham. Langham had once defeated Sayers, and thereby taught him the tactics by which he defeated Heenan. There was as yet no special technique of glove fighting: the traditions and influence of the old ring were unquestioned and supreme; and they distinctly made for brains, skill, quickness, and mobility, as against brute violence, not at all on moral grounds, but because experience had proved that giants did not succeed in the ring under the old rules, and that crafty middle-weights did.

This did not last long. The spectators did not want to see skill defeating violence: they wanted to see violence drawing blood and pounding its way to a savage and exciting victory in the shortest possible time (the

old prizefight usually dragged on for hours, and was ended by exhaustion rather than by victory). So did most of the judges. And the public and the judges naturally had their wish; for the competitors, as I have already explained, soon discovered that the only way to make sure of a favorable verdict was to "knock out" their adversary. All pretence of sparring "for points": that is, for marks on an examination paper filled up by the judges, and representing nothing but impracticable academic pedantry in its last ditch, was dropped; and the competitions became frank fights, with abundance of blood drawn, and "knock-outs" always imminent. Needless to add, the glove fight soon began to pay. The select and thinly attended spars on the turf at Lillie Bridge gave way to crowded exhibitions on the hard boards of St. James's Hall. These were organized by the Boxing Association; and to them the provinces, notably Birmingham, sent up a new race of boxers whose sole aim was to knock their opponent insensible by a right-hand blow on the jaw, knowing well that no Birmingham man could depend on a verdict before a London audience for any less undeniable achievement.

The final step was taken by an American pugilist. He threw off the last shred of the old hypocrisy of the gloved hand by challenging the whole world to produce a man who could stand before him for a specified time without being knocked out. His brief but glorious career completely re-established pugilism by giving a world-wide advertisement to the fact that the boxing glove spares nothing but the public conscience, and that as much ferocity, bloodshed, pain, and risk of serious injury or death can be enjoyed at a glove fight as at an

old-fashioned prizefight, whilst the strain on the combatants is much greater. It is true that these horrors are greatly exaggerated by the popular imagination, and that if boxing were really as dangerous as bicycling, a good many of its heroes would give it up from simple fright; but this only means that there is a maximum of damage to the spectator by demoralization, combined with the minimum of deterrent risk to the poor scrapper in the ring.

Poor scrapper, though, is hardly the word for a modern fashionable American pugilist. To him the exploits of Cashel Byron will seem ludicrously obscure and low-lived. The contests in which he engages are like Handel Festivals: they take place in huge halls before enormous audiences, with cinematographs hard at work recording the scene for reproduction in London and elsewhere. The combatants divide thousands of dollars of gate-money between them: indeed, if an impecunious English curate were to go to America and challenge the premier pugilist, the spectacle of a match between the Church and the Ring would attract a colossal crowd; and the loser's share of the gate would be a fortune to a curate—assuming that the curate would be the loser, which is by no means a foregone conclusion. At all events, it would be well worth a bruise or two. So my story of the Agricultural Hall, where William Paradise sparred for half a guinea, and Cashel Byron stood out for ten guineas, is no doubt read by the profession in America with amused contempt. In 1882 it was, like most of my conceptions, a daring anticipation of coming social developments, though to-day it seems as far out of date as Slender pulling Sackerson's chain.

Of these latter-day commercial developments of glove fighting I know nothing beyond what I gather from the newspapers. The banging matches of the eighties, in which not one competitor in twenty either exhibited artistic skill, or, in his efforts to knock out his adversary, succeeded in anything but tiring and disappointing himself, were for the most part tedious beyond human endurance. When, after wading through Boxiana and the files of Bell's Life at the British Museum, I had written Cashel Byron's Profession, I found I had exhausted the comedy of the subject; and as a game of patience or solitaire was decidedly superior to an average spar for a championship in point of excitement, I went no more to the competitions. Since then six or seven generations of boxers have passed into peaceful pursuits; and I have no doubt that my experience is in some respects out of date. The National Sporting Club has arisen; and though I have never attended its reunions, I take its record of three pugilists slain as proving and enormous multiplication of contests, since such accidents are very rare, and in fact do not happen to reasonably healthy men. I am prepared to admit also that the disappearance of the old prize-ring technique must by this time have been compensated by the importation from America of a new glove-fighting technique; for even in a knocking-out match, brains will try conclusions with brawn, and finally establish a standard of skill; but I notice that in the leading contests in America luck seems to be on the side of brawn, and brain frequently finishes in a state of concussion, a loser after performing miracles of "science." I use the word luck advisedly; for one of the fascinations of boxing

to the gambler (who is the main pillar of the sporting world) is that it is a game of hardihood, pugnacity and skill, all at the mercy of chance. The knock-out itself is a pure chance. I have seen two powerful laborers batter one another's jaws with all their might for several rounds apparently without giving one another as much as a toothache. And I have seen a winning pugilist collapse at a trifling knock landed by a fluke at the fatal angle. I once asked an ancient prizefighter what a knock-out was like when it did happen. He was a man of limited descriptive powers; so he simply pointed to the heavens and said, "Up in a balloon." An amateur pugilist, with greater command of language, told me that "all the milk in his head suddenly boiled over." I am aware that some modern glove fighters of the American school profess to have reduced the knock-out to a science. But the results of the leading American combats conclusively discredit the pretension. When a boxer so superior to his opponent in skill as to be able practically to hit him where he pleases not only fails to knock him out, but finally gets knocked out himself, it is clear that the phenomenon is as complete a mystery pugilistically as it is physiologically, though every pugilist and every doctor may pretend to understand it. It is only fair to add that it has not been proved that any permanent injury to the brain results from it. In any case the brain, as English society is at present constituted, can hardly be considered a vital organ.

This, to the best of my knowledge, is the technical history of the modern revival of pugilism. It is only one more example of the fact that legislators, like other

people, must learn their business by their own mistakes, and that the first attempts to suppress an evil by law generally intensify it. Prizefighting, though often connived at, was never legal. Even in its palmiest days prizefights were banished from certain counties by hostile magistrates, just as they have been driven from the United States and England to Belgium on certain occasions in our own time. But as the exercise of sparring, conducted by a couple of gentlemen with boxing gloves on, was regarded as part of a manly physical education, a convention grew up by which it became practically legal to make a citizen's nose bleed by a punch from the gloved fist, and illegal to do the same thing with the naked knuckles. A code of glove-fighting rules was drawn up by a prominent patron of pugilism; and this code was practically legalized by the fact that even when a death resulted from a contest under these rules the accessaries were not punished. No question was raised as to whether the principals were paid to fight for the amusement of the spectators, or whether a prize for the winner was provided in stakes, share of the gate, or a belt with the title of champion. These, the true criteria of prizefighting, were ignored; and the sole issue raised was whether the famous dictum of Dr. Watts, "Your little hands were never made, etc.," had been duly considered by providing the said little hands with a larger hitting surface, a longer range, and four ounces extra weight.

In short, then, what has happened has been the virtual legalization of prizefighting under cover of the boxing glove. And this is exactly what public opinion desires. We do not like fighting; but we like looking on

at fights: therefore we require a law which will punish the prizefighter if he hits us, and secure us the protection of the police whilst we sit in a comfortable hall and watch him hitting another prizefighter. And that is just the law we have got at present.

Thus Cashel Byron's plea for a share of the legal toleration accorded to the vivisector has been virtually granted since he made it. The legalization of cruelty to domestic animals under cover of the anesthetic is only the extreme instance of the same social phenomenon as the legalization of prizefighting under cover of the boxing glove. The same passion explains the fascination of both practices; and in both, the professors—pugilists and physiologists alike—have to persuade the Home Office that their pursuits are painless and beneficial. But there is also between them the remarkable difference that the pugilist, who has to suffer as much as he inflicts, wants his work to be as painless and harmless as possible whilst persuading the public that it is thrillingly dangerous and destructive, whilst the vivisector wants to enjoy a total exemption from humane restrictions in his laboratory whilst persuading the public that pain is unknown there. Consequently the vivisector is not only crueller than the prizefighter, but, through the pressure of public opinion, a much more resolute and uncompromising liar. For this no one but a Pharisee will single him out for special blame. All public men lie, as a matter of good taste, on subjects which are considered serious (in England a serious occasion means simply an occasion on which nobody tells the truth); and however illogical or capricious the point of honor may be in man, it is too absurd to assume that the doc-

tors who, from among innumerable methods of research, select that of tormenting animals hideously, will hesitate to come on a platform and tell a soothing fib to prevent the public from punishing them. No criminal is expected to plead guilty, or to refrain from pleading not guilty with all the plausibility at his command. In prizefighting such mendacity is not necessary: on the contrary, if a famous pugilist were to assure the public that a blow delivered with a boxing glove could do no injury and cause no pain, and the public believed him, the sport would instantly lose its following. It is the prizefighter's interest to abolish the real cruelties of the ring and to exaggerate the imaginary cruelties of it. It is the vivisector's interest to refine upon the cruelties of the laboratory, whilst persuading the public that his victims pass into a delicious euthanasia and leave behind them a row of bottles containing infallible cures for all the diseases. Just so, too, does the trainer of performing animals assure us that his dogs and cats and elephants and lions are taught their senseless feats by pure kindness.

The public, as Julius Cæsar remarked nearly 2000 years ago, believes on the whole, just what it wants to believe. The laboring masses do not believe the false excuses of the vivisector, because they know that the vivisector experiments on hospital patients; and the masses belong to the hospital patient class. The well-to-do people who do not go to hospitals, and who think they benefit by the experiments made there, believe the vivisectors' excuses, and angrily abuse and denounce the anti-vivisectors. The people who "love animals," who keep pets, and stick pins through butterflies, support

the performing dog people, and are sure that kindness will teach a horse to waltz. And the people who enjoy a fight will persuade themselves that boxing gloves do not hurt, and that sparring is an exercise which teaches self-control and exercises all the muscles in the body more efficiently than any other.

My own view of prizefighting may be gathered from Cashel Byron's Profession, and from the play written by me more than ten years later, entitled Mrs. Warren's Profession. As long as society is so organized that the destitute athlete and the destitute beauty are forced to choose between underpaid drudgery as industrial producers, and comparative self-respect, plenty, and popularity as prizefighters and mercenary brides, licit or illicit, it is idle to affect virtuous indignation at their expense. The word prostitute should either not be used at all, or else applied impartially to all persons who do things for money that they would not do if they had any other assured means of livelihood. The evil caused by the prostitution of the Press and the Pulpit is so gigantic that the prostitution of the prize-ring, which at least makes no serious moral pretensions, is comparatively negligible by comparison. Let us not forget, however, that the throwing of a hard word such as prostitution does not help the persons thus vituperated out of their difficulty. If the soldier and gladiator fight for money, if men and women marry for money, if the journalist and novelist write for money, and the parson preaches for money, it must be remembered that it is an exceedingly difficult and doubtful thing for an individual to set up his own scruples or fancies (he cannot himself be sure which they are) against the demand of

the community when it says, Do thus and thus, or starve. It was easy for Ruskin to lay down the rule of dying rather than doing unjustly; but death is a plain thing: justice a very obscure thing. How is an ordinary man to draw the line between right and wrong otherwise than by accepting public opinion on the subject; and what more conclusive expression of sincere public opinion can there be than market demand? Even when we repudiate that and fall back on our private judgment, the matter gathers doubt instead of clearness. The popular notion of morality and piety is to simply beg all the most important questions in life for other people; but when these questions come home to ourselves, we suddenly discover that the devil's advocate has a stronger case than we thought: we remember that the way of righteousness or death was the way of the Inquisition; that hell is paved, not with bad intentions, but with good ones; that the deeper seers have suggested that the way to save your soul is perhaps to give it away, casting your spiritual bread on the waters, so to speak. No doubt, if you are a man of genius, a Ruskin or an Ibsen, you can divine your way and finally force your passage. If you have the conceit of fanaticism you can die a martyr like Charles I. If you are a criminal, or a gentleman of independent means, you can leave society out of the question and prey on it. But if you are an ordinary person you take your bread as it comes to you, doing whatever you can make most money by doing. And you are really shewing yourself a disciplined citizen and acting with perfect social propriety in so doing. Society may be, and generally is, grossly wrong in its offer to you; and you may be,

and generally are, grossly wrong in supporting the existing political structure; but this only means, to the successful modern prizefighter, that he must reform society before he can reform himself. A conclusion which I recommend to the consideration of those foolish misers of personal righteousness who think they can dispose of social problems by bidding reformers of society reform themselves first.

Practically, then, the question raised is whether fighting with gloves shall be brought, like cockfighting, bear-baiting, and gloveless fist fighting, explicitly under the ban of the law. I do not propose to argue that question out here. But of two things I am certain. First, that glove fighting is quite as fierce a sport as fist fighting. Second, that if an application were made to the Borough Council of which I am a member, to hire the Town Hall for a boxing competition, I should vote against the applicants.

This second point being evidently the practical one, I had better give my reason. Exhibition pugilism is essentially a branch of Art: that is to say, it acts and attracts by propagating feeling. The feeling it propagates is pugnacity. Sense of danger, dread of danger, impulse to batter and destroy what threatens and opposes, triumphant delight in succeeding: this is pugnacity, the great adversary of the social impulse to live and let live; to establish our rights by shouldering our share of the social burden; to face and examine danger instead of striking at it; to understand everything to the point of pardoning (and righting) everything; to conclude an amnesty with Nature wide enough to include even those we know the worst of: namely, our-

selves. If two men quarrelled, and asked the Borough Council to lend them a room to fight it out in with their fists, on the ground that a few minutes' hearty punching of one another's heads would work off their bad blood and leave them better friends, each desiring, not victory, but *satisfaction*, I am not sure that I should not vote for compliance. But if a syndicate of showmen came and said, Here we have two men who have no quarrel, but who will, if you pay them, fight before your constituency and thereby make a great propaganda of pugnacity in it, sharing the profits with us and with you, I should indignantly oppose the proposition. And if the majority were against me, I should try to persuade them to at least impose the condition that the fight should be with naked fists under the old rules, so that the combatants should, like Sayers and Langham, depend on bunging up each other's eyes rather than, like the modern knocker-out, giving one another concussion of the brain.

I may add, finally, that the present halting between the legal toleration and suppression of commercial pugilism is much worse than the extreme of either, because it takes away the healthy publicity and sense of responsibility which legality and respectability give, without suppressing the blackguardism which finds its opportunity in shady pursuits. I use the term commercial advisedly. Put a stop to boxing for money; and pugilism will give society no further trouble.

London, 1901.

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Shaw, George Bernard
The man of destiny

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